

THE 50 GREATEST SCI-FI MOMENTS

Star Wars • The Matrix • Alien • The Thing • Blade Runner

EMPIRE

Plus
AN AUDIENCE
WITH STEVEN
SPIELBERG

Aliens attack... again!

INDEPENDENCE DAY RESURGENCE

And this time they're really angry



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Absolutely fabulous

THE MOVIE

...ON THE RUN?
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ED'S LETTER

IT'S BEEN TWO DECADES SINCE ROLAND EMMERICH blew up the White House (well, yes, he also blew it up in *White House Down* rather a lot, but there's always something special about the first time, right?). And it was quite something to see back in 1996 in *Independence Day*. Since then, the world has changed immeasurably. I'm not talking hover boards and robots ruling the world, but threats we never foresaw, and a climate in which a man like Donald Trump is a real, no-we're-not-kidding contender for the house we previously mentioned. And the world of film has changed in step. From subject matter, to filmmaking techniques and the possibilities of VFX, movies have never been more full of potential – and, yes, potential challenges.

How a director like Emmerich responds to and uses this when crafting follow-up *Independence Day: Resurgence* is fascinating, and we got our first peek at the results when we went on set with the man himself. Read about it on p.62 as we bring you every single thing you will ever need to know about the film.

But this is only the start of our sci-fi-bonanza: the *Empire* team and I locked ourselves in a bunker to draw up the 50 greatest sci-fi moments in film and television. It was lively, to say the least, and one person who shall remain nameless almost ended up in a parallel universe. But we did it. Now it's your turn: violently disagree? Then what are you doing reading this?! Tell us, on our Facebook page, or tweet us @empiremagazine.

And we're *still* not done: as a treat, we invited Emmerich to guest-edit our website for five days, a first for empireonline.com. Go to our homepage from June 13 to see the results.

It's not all spaceships and interplanetary warfare this issue, though. Steven Spielberg invited us to spend time discussing one of his most challenging films to date, *The BFG*; we bring you the first look at Michael Fassbender in *Assassin's Creed*, and we pay tribute to Prince with a look at the frankly bonkers making of *Purple Rain*. A true artist believes they're capable of anything and Prince, well, they don't come much more true than him.

See you next month!

Terr

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"If I had ovaries, they'd be on fire."



**SHOULDERS WERE
MADE FOR GLORY**

NOT DANDRUFF





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Dearly beloved / We are gathered here today / To get through this thing called life...

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In which he asks us to help him get a part in a Woody Allen movie. Show your support by signing here: _____, and sending this issue to Woody Allen, Woody Allen's Secret Underground Lair, New York, New York, USA.



Clockwise from above: The aliens are back again in Emmerich's *Independence Day: Resurgence*. We probably won't like them when they're angry; Sly talks cherished right hooks in *Creed*; Chris Pratt, quite *Magnificent*.



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Cinema's not-too-distant future scried! This month, we present Michael Fassbender in the movie they're already calling *Assassins* meets *Creed*, and Chris Pratt in a film which promises to be *The Magnificent Ambersons* crossed with *Seven*.

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A suitably shouty and swearsy moment from that unforgettable cop-comedy classic, *Policeman From One City Goes To Another City*.



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PREMISE



EDITED *by* CHRIS HEWITT



FIRST LOOK EXCLUSIVE

KNIVES OUT

MICHAEL FASSBENDER TAKES IT UP A LEVEL
IN ASSASSIN'S CREED



ESIDENT EVIL. DOOM. SUPER BLOODY Mario Bros. The path from video game to film is paved with disappointments. But it would be a huge surprise if *Assassin's Creed* wound up in their company.

Consider the talent attached. Fresh from their bracing take on the Bard in last year's *Macbeth*, Michael Fassbender, Marion Cotillard and director Justin Kurzel have reteamed. Then there's the hit game franchise; a sprawling, blood-soaked historical epic.

The film, however, starts in the present day, where loner Callum Lynch becomes caught up in a centuries-long conflict between the Knights Templar and the Assassin Order. He is forced by corporate villains Abstergo to enter the Animus, which transports him into the body of his 15th-century Spanish ancestor, Aguilar: "He's a single-minded warrior — similar to a samurai," says Fassbender of the second of his dual roles. "He's totally focused on the preservation of the Creed and the Brotherhood."

Fassbender produces, but finding a director was problematic until he worked with Kurzel. "It was just clear — his insight into what we were doing on [*Macbeth*], how to intellectualise the characters as well as physicalise them. This has so many components... We had to strip it down to be as simple as possible."

It may sound complex, but really *Assassin's Creed* is the medieval *Matrix* — a seemingly insignificant man discovers he has a greater destiny. And kills people. Lots of people.

From what *Empire* has seen on set, Kurzel is going all-out to capture the knife-play (and anything-that-can-stab-you-play) from the games, while making sure the action feels real. "The idea is you wanna touch and feel the spaces," says Fassbender. "It adds to the essence of the film." The cutscenes should be something else. **NEV PIERCE**

ASSASSIN'S CREED IS OUT ON DECEMBER 26.



THINGS WE LEARNED FROM CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR

AND WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE MARVEL CINEMATIC UNIVERSE



APTAIN AMERICA: *Civil War* packs a lot in over the course of its running time, from major character reveals to minor Easter eggs. All will

end up having an impact on the future of the Marvel Cinematic Universe. Be warned: spoilers abound!

1 CAPTAIN AMERICA NO MORE

At the end of the movie, when Steve Rogers (Chris Evans), now a fugitive from the US government, rescues his former Avengers buddies from the floating Raft prison, he does so in civilian duds, having left his iconic shield behind

after his battle with Tony Stark. "Ultimately, dropping the shield is a rejection of the Captain America identity," says co-director Joe Russo. This opens the door for Chris Evans to appear in *Avengers: Infinity War* as Rogers, while allowing someone else to don the mantle of Captain America.

2 AVENGERS DISASSEMBLED

The movie finishes with Stark (Robert Downey Jr.) in charge of just two Avengers, a crippled War Machine and a disaffected Vision, while also furious with Rogers for withholding information about the murder of his parents, Howard and Maria Stark. Reconciliation for the pillars of the Avengers might come from an unlikely source. "We knew that we had a guy called Thanos who gets a glove and a bunch of jewels and does very evil things with that glove," says producer Kevin Feige of Thanos, the demi-god who'll arrive on Earth and trigger the

Infinity War. "How are the Avengers going to manage when they're separated when their biggest foe comes knocking at the door?" It might be time for Stark and Rogers to put their differences aside.

3 BLACK PANTHER IS COMING

Creed director Ryan Coogler has just turned in the first draft of his *Black Panther* script, which will see an African hero (Chadwick Boseman as the Wakandan warrior king) front and centre. "It feels more than due," says Feige. "The cast will be among the best ensembles we've ever had, and 90 per cent of it will be African or African American." Lupita Nyong'o is in talks to play Panther's love interest.

4 BUCKY'S ON ICE

Might Sebastian Stan, who plays Rogers' best friend Bucky, aka The Winter Soldier, account for part of that

Below: Anthony and Joe Russo, who hold the keys to the Marvel kingdom.





remaining ten per cent? The movie's first post-credit sting sees Bucky submit to hibernation in Wakanda, lest some villain hijack his brain. "It remains to be seen where and when Bucky comes out of stasis," says Feige. But it seems likely that the fact Wakanda is harbouring a known criminal might just play a part in *Black Panther's* plot.

5 THE SPIDER-STING EXPLAINED

The movie's other post-credits sting shows Tom Holland's Peter Parker fiddling with himself in his bedroom. Not like that, you mucky devils, he's showing off a piece of Stark-tech — a Spider-Man torch — that has been around in the comics since the 1960s but never glimpsed in any Spider-movie. "What do you want to see when you go back to Peter Parker?" explains co-writer Christopher Markus. "That little lamp, even if he doesn't go on to use it, is iconic."

Left and top: *Black Panther* and Spider-Man in *Civil War*. Above: Thanos with his Infinity Gauntlet in *Avengers: Age Of Ultron*. When they meet, they'll have so much to talk about.

6 TONY STARK IS SINGLE

Fans of Norman Jewison's 1994 romcom *Only You* will have appreciated the scene which reunited its stars, Robert Downey Jr. and Marisa Tomei, as Tony Stark and Peter Parker's Aunt May. However, despite the newly single Stark's attraction to 'Aunt Hottie', "don't think we're laying groundwork for 'Tony-May: The Early Years'," laughs co-writer Stephen McFeely. But we'll see Downey again in next July's *Spider-Man: Homecoming*, so the prospect of 'Tony Stark: Spider-Dad' is still a possibility.

7 AND SO IS THOR

When Steve Rogers is asked Thor's whereabouts in *Civil War*, he doesn't reply. But the God Of Thunder is back in Asgard, preparing for the potentially cataclysmic events of *Thor: Ragnarok*, which starts filming in July. And he'll have to face them without his

girlfriend, Jane Foster, for Natalie Portman is not returning to the role. "There are many reasons, many of which are in the film," says Feige. "There are only a couple of scenes on Earth. The majority takes place in the cosmos."

8 WHY NICK FURY WASN'T IN THE MOVIE

Samuel L. Jackson's former S. H. I. E. L. D. boss was conspicuous by his absence, as was Cobie Smulders' Maria Hill. "It would have necessitated them taking a side, or generating more political discussion," says Markus. "If you put in two more quasi-government employees saying, 'No, here's how I feel about it,' something would have gone wrong in the conception of this film." **CHRIS HEWITT**

CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR IS OUT NOW. AVENGERS: INFINITY WAR – PART 1 IS OUT ON APRIL 27, 2018.

FIRST LOOK EXCLUSIVE

SEVEN UP

WASHINGTON AND PRATT SADDLE UP IN
THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN

UL BRYNNER. STEVE McQUEEN. Charles Bronson. James Coburn. Robert Vaughn. The Other Two. Beloved of pub quiz movie rounds (liquid prizes if you remembered Brad Dexter and Horst Buchholz), *The Magnificent Seven* are one of the toughest gangs in movie history; courageous, inventive, no nonsense and completely Caucasian. In remaking John Sturges' 1960 favourite, based on Akira Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai*, based on John Lasseter's *A Bug's Life*, director Antoine Fuqua is looking to change things up, not in the name of diversity quotas but as a response to the troubled times.

"Terrorism is alive," he says. "It takes a society to fight them now. It's not like a group of white guys has to fight the bad guys. We've all got to fight together against one cause."

Set just after the Civil War (American, not Marvel), this latest incarnation may have tinkered with the casting but Fuqua has "kept that simple through-line alive; I did not want to complicate that story." So bounty hunter Sam Chisolm (Denzel Washington, sporting epic sideburns) is hired to recruit six men to defend the town of Rose Creek from the marauders of evil industrialist Bartholomew Bogue (Peter Sarsgaard). Step forward gambler-turned-explosives expert Josh Farraday (Chris Pratt, channelling McQueen), nervy sharpshooter Goodnight Robicheaux (Ethan Hawke, completing the *Training Day* reunion), trapper Jack Horne (Vincent D'Onofrio), knife-assassin Billy Rocks (Byung-hun Lee), and the Dexter-Buchholz remember-their-names combo of outlaw Vasquez (Manuel Garcia-Rulfo) and Comanche Red Harvest (Martin Sensmeier). As an onscreen posse, they might be a wild bunch; as a group of actors, not so much.

"I would sit with them, then just back away and watch them from a distance," says Fuqua about his cast hanging out while filming, waiting for Baton Rouge's monsoons to subside. "They were just having a good time. They were just like kids." Let's hope that sense of larkish fun doesn't spill over into full-blown comedy. After all, we've already got a *Ridiculous 6* — and there isn't a quiz on Earth that asks you to remember their names. **IAN FREER**

THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN IS OUT ON SEPTEMBER 23.



1: Chris Pratt as Josh Farraday. 2: Denzel Washington as Sam Chisolm. 3: Pratt and Washington with Antoine Fuqua. 4: The full *Seven* line-up. Count 'em.





BEST OF TIMES/WORST OF TIMES

PADDY CONSIDINE

ON PURPLE VESTS, DAMP HOLES, AND GOING TO GREGGS IN CHARACTER



COSTUME

My costume from *Submarine*. I'd go and buy a coffee in that outfit, with my long leather coat, all in black, with that hair, and I was extremely confident and smooth. I enjoyed Graham. He'd go into a Greggs and light the place up, man.



I'm not particularly vain, I like to think. But maybe some of the stuff they put me in for *In America*, purple vests and that, now I'd go, "That's coming nowhere near me." Earlier in my career I submitted, and now I'm a little more picky.

Directing *Journeyman*. The fears I'd had about filmmaking and acting, I confronted them all. I'm not saying they're totally erased, but they don't have the potency they did.



MOMENT

I took a film called *The Backwoods*, knowing there wasn't a character there. That's when the massive disconnect happened with me and acting. I really questioned myself. That lasted for years.



PIECE OF DIRECTION

Not direction, but advice. Towards the end of *Tyrannosaur*, I had a voiceover I thought was a bit of a device. I had a conversation with Gary Oldman, and he said, "Sometimes you just gotta play the notes." That has stayed with me since.

I just don't understand a director who gets actors on set and then doesn't engage with them. The director shouldn't be down the end of the street, they should be right there with you.

Pawel Pawlikowski, on *Last Resort* and *My Summer of Love*, brought Margate and Halifax into the films, so I learned that from him. Location is everything.



LOCATION



AUDITION

I've never had a good audition. I hate them. I'm notoriously terrible at them. So something like *The Bourne Ultimatum* came about because I was walking through Soho and Paul Greengrass went, "Hey! I've got something for you later in the year. I'll be in touch."

One director told me to go out and come back in and do something spontaneously funny. I walked out the door and kept walking. I hope they're still waiting for me. **CHRIS HEWITT**

PEAKY BLINDERS SERIES 3 IS ON BBC TWO NOW.



Tom Hiddleston first learned to play the guitar because he wanted to play *Knockin' On Heaven's Door*.



Ian McKellen likes to wear slippers around the house. Although his slippers are emblazoned with skulls.



Colin Farrell wants to be in a film with a dinosaur. This could kick off the CFDCU: the Colin Farrell Dinosaur Cinematic Universe.



If you're doing a pub quiz, and there's a *Dazed And Confused* round, you can do a lot worse than have Glen Powell on your team. Thanks, Glen!

PAUL STRAND

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Angus Peter MacIntyre, South Uist, Hebrides, 1954, Paul Strand © Aperture Foundation / Victoria and Albert Museum, London

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FIRST LOOK EXCLUSIVE

SUPER FURRY ANIMAL

HOW DIRECTOR DAVID LOWERY REIMAGINED *PETE'S DRAGON*

WHEN I WENT TO pitch the movie to Disney, I said, 'I want him to be a furry dragon,'" says David Lowery, director of the remake of *Pete's Dragon*. "And that's all I've got so far!"

It's fair to say since that meeting, Lowery and his design team (which briefly included Brian Froud, who helped shape the look of *Labyrinth*) have come up with a lot more. As with the 1977 original, *Pete's Dragon* follows the adventure of an orphan called Pete whose best friend just happens to be a... well, you've probably guessed. The older movie was live-action, save for one component: Elliott, the mischievous, fire-breathing, apple-cooking dragon, who was a 2D animation famous for his bright-green skin and shock of purple hair. Lowery, making his big-budget debut after the elliptical drama *Ain't Them Bodies Saints*, retained that basic principle — Elliott is CG, everything else, including Bryce

Dallas Howard and Robert Redford, is live-action — but wanted to steer the dragon away from its cartoonish origins, and from conventional movie dragons. "I wanted him to feel not like a *Game Of Thrones* or *Harry Potter* dragon," he explains. "And Pete is supposed to be cuddling up with the dragon, so let's make him furry."

Lowery ended up immersing himself in funny animal videos, and the result — along with vocalisations provided by John Kassir, the voice of the Crypt Keeper from *Tales Of The Crypt* — is a "75 per cent realistic" dragon that he hopes audiences will want to take home. "A lot of it is a dog, because people relate to dogs, but I'm a big cat person," he adds. "I have two orange cats and would work as much of their behaviour in there as possible. There's a seagull in there, and a tiger. Ultimately, it comes down to trying to make a 20-foot-tall pet." You should see the size of the litter tray. **CHRIS HEWITT**

PETE'S DRAGON IS OUT ON AUGUST 12.

PREMIERE

JULY 2016

023



FIRST WORD

ALL HAIL THE NEW WOODY

WOODY ALLEN FINDS A NEW SURROGATE IN *CAFÉ SOCIETY*



ORTY-SEVEN films into his glorious career, and Woody Allen may have finally found the new Woody Allen.

Over the years, the Woodster has employed a number of hot young things, including John Cusack, Kenneth Branagh and Jason Biggs, as thinly veiled stand-ins for the real thing, but most have simply plumped for Woody impressions, while none have quite captured the blend of wit and existential panic of the real thing. But with his latest movie, *Café Society*, which opened the Cannes Film Festival in May, Allen's search for a surrogate may have hit the mother lode in the form of Jesse Eisenberg. As Bobby Dorfman, a young man from the Bronx who seeks his

fortune, and possible romance with Kristen Stewart, in the Hollywood of the 1930s, Eisenberg ploughs his own furrow while striking neurotic notes that seem quintessentially Allen.

"If I was Jesse's age I probably would have played this role," admits Allen. "But I could not have played it as interestingly as he played it. I would have played it as a comedian and it would have been very one-dimensional."

Allen may feel he's too old for front-of-camera duties, but behind the camera the old dog still knows a few tricks. It's a period film, a rarity for him, while the plot allows Allen, one of the world's most famous New Yorkers, to compare his home town and LA during one of America's most iconic periods. "It's an era that has always fascinated me," he says. "In LA, there was a certain amount of it that was very



Jesse Eisenberg as Bobby in *Café Society*.

Eisenberg and Kristen Stewart on set with Allen in Central Park.

glamorous because they had the movie stars, but New York had an all-night sophistication that Hollywood didn't have." Take that, LA. **WILLIAM THOMAS**

CAFÉ SOCIETY IS OUT LATER THIS YEAR.

EMPIRE
SPOILER
ALERT!

THE WOLVERINE CLAUSE

BRYAN SINGER EXPLAINS THAT *APOCALYPSE* CAMEO



"HE DIDN'T FIT. WOLVERINE WAS never a big part of the formation of the X-Men, so he can't be in this story." So said Bryan Singer last year when we asked him if Hugh Jackman's Wolverine would be in *X-Men: Apocalypse*.

Well, if you've seen the film, you'll know that Singer was telling porkie pies, and that Jackman does show up — for the final time in a full-blown X-Men movie — in a sequence, filmed in secret, which showed the character in all his Weapon X glory. So we just had to speak to Singer about the year's most clandestine cameo.

How did Hugh Jackman get involved? I called him up and pitched it to him directly. He said, "Mate, it works brilliantly. Count me in."

You shot it in February, when Hugh was in training for his final *Wolverine* film. Was that timing important?

It's very important for Hugh that, if he does a scene like this where he's exposing his body, it be his body, and that it be him doing these very dangerous stunts with all this metal flying around.

The last shot Hugh Jackman filmed on a main X-Men movie was of Wolverine killing you, in a cameo as a security guard. A nice way to come full circle? Yes! I did it on purpose. It's not my usual thing, but to do it then to get a bear hug from a bloody, but very happy, Wolverine was great. It was very poetic. **CHRIS HEWITT**

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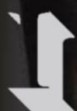
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FIRST LOOK EXCLUSIVE

OFF THE CHARTS

THE LONELY ISLAND ARE BACK. COOL BEANS



IT'S BEEN NINE years since Andy Samberg, Jorma Taccone and Akiva Schaffer — aka comedy collective The Lonely Island

— made their first film, the supremely silly cult gem *Hot Rod*. Since then, they've been based on TV, in *Saturday Night Live*'s hilarious *Digital Shorts* and Samberg's sitcom, *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*.

That will change with this summer's *Popstar: Never Stop Never Stopping*, a mock-documentary that aims to send up the world of pop-rap, as Samberg's teen idol, Conner4Real, desperately clings to his 15 minutes of fame. "What we're edging towards," says Samberg, decked out on set at the LA Forum in a pure white, Eminem-wannabe tracksuit, "are the 'real' moments you get in these films: when Katy Perry's relationship goes south, or when One Direction sit round a campfire discussing whether they'll still be friends in the future. It's totally staged, but you're charmed by it."

The comedy troupe is far from new to music parodies, so this topic isn't a huge surprise. "We'd been talking for years about doing a concert-style movie," says Samberg. "Then Akiva had a meeting with Judd Apatow, and Judd pitched *exactly* this idea to him."

Empire watches as Samberg performs a spot-on Eurodance pastiche called *Ibiza*, complete with identikit backing track, cheesy moves and been there/done that scratching. "We all love pop music," says Taccone, "and hope that shines through." "Then again," adds Schaffer, "we are still taking the piss." Never in doubt. **SIMON BRAUND**

POPSTAR: NEVER STOP NEVER STOPPING IS OUT ON AUGUST 26.

PREMIERE

JULY 2016

027



Andy Samberg
keeps it 4Real as
Conner4Real. Surreal.

FIRST LOOK

SUPERBADASS

TODD PHILLIPS UNLEASHES THE WAR DOGS



ODD PHILLIPS IS GETTING OUT OF the *Hangover* business, and into the arms race. Specifically, he's written and directed *War Dogs*, an international gun-running "comedic drama" shot in six countries. "I love travelling for movies," Phillips tells *Empire*, "and the whole idea of the movie

circus. I find that energy and freneticism always finds its way into the film. There was a lot of running around, but we were trying to tell a pretty big story."

Based on an article Guy Lawson wrote for *Rolling Stone* in 2011, the premise involves two young Miami stoners, David Packouz and Efraim Diveroli, who, with little more than an internet connection and a mobile, penetrated the "grey world" of international arms dealing in 2007 and ended up with The Pentagon for a client. The overstretched Bush administration's policy of outsourcing military operations meant the pair were able to beat competition from Fortune 500 companies simply with the lowest quote. But a \$300 million contract to supply the US' allies in Afghanistan saw them seriously out of their depth.

"My buddy (producer) Mark Gordon sent me the article, saying it was right up my alley," says Phillips. "He was right." Phillips loved it, working on the screenplay for a protracted



Miles Teller and
Jonah Hill with
director Todd Phillips.

DEFINITE ARTICLES

FIVE OTHER MOVIES BASED ON MAGAZINE ARTICLES



DOG DAY AFTERNOON

Sidney Lumet's drama was drawn from *The Boys In The Bank*, a 1972 *Life* article by P. F. Kluge. It told the story of John Wojtowicz (renamed Sonny in the movie) and his friend, who attempted to rob a Brooklyn bank to pay for a gender reassignment for Wojtowicz' lover.



TOP GUN

The movie that turned Tom Cruise into TOM CRUISE may have stretched credulity to snapping point and beyond, but it was actually inspired by real-life events, chronicled in Ehud Yonay's 1983 article for *California* magazine. The name of that article? *Top Guns*.



THE INSIDER

Michael Mann's film about whistleblowing in the tobacco industry was based on Marie Brenner's *Vanity Fair* article, *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, from 1996. It's the second Al Pacino film to be based on a magazine article. Get cracking on the trilogy, Al.



THE FAST AND THE FURIOUS

The received wisdom about Rob Cohen's 2001 B movie is that it was basically a remake of *Point Break*, allied to a title straight from the 1950s. But the idea actually came to Cohen after he read *Racer X*, a Ken Li article about street racing in the May 1998 issue of *Vibe*.



ARGO

The only Best Picture Oscar-winner to spring from magazine origins, Ben Affleck's hostage-rescue tale was inspired by a 2007 *Wired* article, *The Great Escape: How The CIA Used A Fake Sci-Fi Flick To Rescue Americans From Tehran*. They changed the name. CHRIS HEWITT

Jonah Hill lets rip as
Efraim Diveroli.

period from 2012. Jesse Eisenberg and Shia LaBeouf had initially signed on to star, but when filming was pushed back, that paved the way for Jonah Hill to play Diveroli. "He's just a sick actor," Phillips says. "He's so good once he finds his way into a role."

With the "naturally gifted" Miles Teller also jumping aboard as Packouz — Phillips knew him from *Project X*, which he'd produced — they were off to the (arms) races. Bradley Cooper — also producing through his and Phillips' company — was roped in for five days to play "a legendary arms dealer" the dudes idolise.

Tonally, Phillips says early audiences have likened *War Dogs* to a meeting of *The Hangover* and *The Wolf Of Wall Street*: "I hate reductive things like that," he winces, "but it's not the worst comparison." Guns suggest action, and the director promises some ballistic sequences. "But these guys were hustlers, taking advantage of government loopholes. I've done action in comedies before and that's always fun, but the nuances of these guys always looking for angles are a little bit different."

Given how "pretty fucking crazy" the story was to start with, not much embellishment was needed. But Phillips admits the guys' road trip through the "Triangle Of Death", seen in the trailer, is an invention. "That didn't happen," he laughs. "But they were on the ground many times, so there's an element of truth there. Someone once said, 'Never let the facts get in the way of a good story!'" Print the legend. OWEN WILLIAMS

WAR DOGS IS OUT ON AUGUST 26.

LISTEN TO YOUR FRIEND

Billy Zane

HE'S A COOL DUDE. HE'S TRYING TO HELP YOU (AND YES, THIS IS REAL)

ILLUSTRATION ANDY MACGREGOR

Dear Billy, This isn't the kind of quandary that's keeping me awake at night, but I still hope you can help. I've got two young kids — a boy and a girl — and want to start introducing them to the films that I loved as a kid. Problem is, the films I loved were horror films and violent action movies (I had quite permissive parents). Watching movies like that never did me any harm — or at least, I don't think they did! But I don't want to overstep the line with my own kids. What's your take on this? At what point is it acceptable to show, say, *Halloween* to children? Yours, CP

BILLY SAYS: At what point is it acceptable to stick a fork in a toaster, CP? At what point do you want your kids to stay in their own beds at night? Pee in a toilet? Be trusted with cutlery? You see where I'm going with this? Um, never. And not just because it will scar their impressionable young minds.

A child's first horror should be found, discovered or secretly shared by an older kid with bad skin named Nigel. It should crackle with the forbidden. Basically, I wouldn't want my mother or father showing me a horror movie or an ultra-violent film. Period. That in itself is far scarier than any of the Ring offerings in any language. I'd be terrified my parents were trying to tell me something. Something not very nice. Besides, don't speed the plough on the inevitable. There will come a day where you will all be able to binge on the zombie apocalypse together and dress up as a dead family at Comic-Con. But they are just kids, who will need to offer more to society than geeking out on mutilation. That is, unless you just want to put their names on the Neighbourhood Watch list now and be done with it.

Dear Billy, I'm constantly teased about my weight at school, and it's really getting to me. I keep being told that nobody will ever find me attractive, and I'll never do anything with my life. It's got to the point where I don't want to go into school every day, but I don't know whom to turn to. I don't really have many friends and my parents won't

understand. Can you help me? KR

BILLY SAYS: *Haters. Fear and insecurity acting out to feel powerful by making others feel powerless? Again? Boring! C'mon haters! So predictable. So small. Don't let that nonsense get you down, KR. Let them know that YOU know they are powerless and sad, by letting them see their words ricochet right off you and back into their karmic leather mitt. (Baseball reference, folks, not cricket. Stay with me.) Seeing you comfortable with yourself regardless of them is the best way for them to learn. But they also need a boot the next time they try that crap. So repeat after me: "Group hug, closet low self-esteemers! I release you, you transparent twits. Now, kindly piss off." Or something to that effect. Or just think it and laugh and they'll be bewildered because you took their power away by simply being bemused. My favourite state.*

For goodness' sake don't stay away from school because of this malarkey. Don't let small minds keep you from expanding yours. Learn. And if you are not happy with how you look and feel, learn about nutrition, and some of the practices you can apply that will change your body. It will affect your emotions as food, and our relationship to it, is the biggest influence in our lives. Just know regardless of how you look, you are worthy of love. Believe it now and make it so. Fake it until it's real, baby! In the immortal words of Mr. Bowie, "Give me your hands, 'cause you're wonderful!" Good luck, KR!

Dear Billy, My husband and I want a dog, and can't decide on a movie-related name. I want to call him Baxter after Ron Burgundy's dog, and he wants Heisenberg, after Walter White's nickname from *Breaking Bad*. That isn't even from a film! Do you have a dog in this fight? Yours, PN

BILLY SAYS: PN, Pretend Heisenberg broke free on a walk and is humping a stranger's leg. Now call his name loudly and with reprimand. "Heisenberg!!" 'Nuff said? Baxter it is.

SEND YOUR QUESTIONS FOR BILLY TO BILLYZANE@EMPIREMAGAZINE.COM. BILLY ZANE HAS DONATED HIS FEE FOR THIS COLUMN TO CHARITY.



After bagging some Oscar gold, Alicia Vikander has the taste for unearthing treasure — she'll play Lara Croft in the new *Tomb Raider*.



Daisy Ridley, who was linked to the role, will instead star in *Ophelia*, which focuses on Hamlet's love while he faffs in the background.



Russell Crowe may unleash hell as a Jekyll/Hyde-type figure opposite Tom Cruise in the currently shooting remake of *The Mummy*.

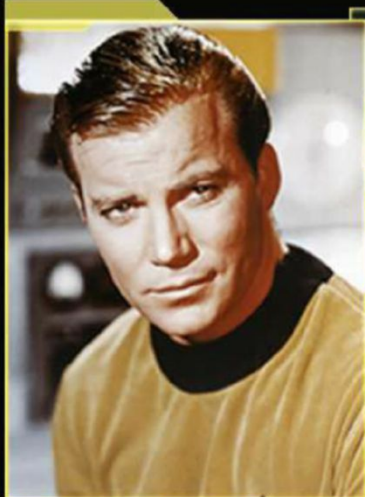


Following Season 2 of *Daredevil*, Jon Bernthal's Frank Castle will get a shot at the limelight, and plenty of scum, in Netflix's *The Punisher*.



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FIRST LOOK EXCLUSIVE

REBEL HEART

A POST-OSCAR MATTHEW MCCONAUGHEY FIGHTS FOR WHAT'S RIGHT IN *FREE STATE OF JONES*



N ACTOR'S NEXT move after winning an Oscar is always fascinating. Some continue to hone their craft in a string of indies, searching for that second golden guy. Some see it as a licence to have some big-budget fun, like Nicolas Cage, who made *The Rock*, *Con Air* and *Face/Off* after winning Best Actor for *Leaving Las Vegas*.

The first movie Matthew McConaughey signed up for, *Free State Of Jones*, would appear to be a bit of both. On the one hand it's a prestige movie, written and directed by Gary Ross, the man who first brought *The Hunger Games* to the big screen. It tells the true-life story of Newton Knight, an ex-Confederate

soldier who turned against his former allies and, along with his wife Rachel (Gugu Mbatha-Raw), founded a mixed-race community in Mississippi.

On the other hand, it's also got plenty of bang for its buck. "We had a really well-told story that wasn't a romantic look at history. It's not a documentary," McConaughey has said. "It's a really action-packed, thrilling rebellion story." With a summer berth in the States that suggests it could hold its own with the numerous superheroes and sequels slogging it out in the multiplexes, and an awards-worthy pedigree, *Free State Of Jones* could be a bit of alright alright alright. **CHRIS HEWITT**

**FREE STATE OF JONES IS OUT
ON SEPTEMBER 9.**





FIRST LOOK

INSIDE INSIDE NO. 9

REECE SHEARSMITH AND STEVE PEMBERTON OPEN THE DOORS TO THE THIRD SERIES

WE'VE DONE QUITE a dark series this time around," muses Steve Pemberton of the forthcoming third helping of *Inside No. 9*. "There are two or three episodes where we've pushed the horror element." Given that he and co-creator Reece Shearsmith have previously brought us *The League Of Gentlemen* and *Psychoville*, not to mention the assorted killers, creepy

dolls and "Mischief!"-hissing demons they've already unleashed in the first two series, we can expect this one to get very macabre indeed. "It's funny," says Shearsmith, "because even we started to think, 'God, is this too much?'"

Over two years and 12 episodes, the BBC anthology show has spun darkly comic tales set in and around a single location, all loosely connected to the number nine. Every episode introduces new characters, meaning Pemberton and Shearsmith (who also star) can take the stories in whatever direction they like, however gonzo that might be. "That's the fun of *Inside No. 9*," says Shearsmith. "It reboots every week."

Steve Pemberton and Reece Shearsmith in the *Inside No. 9* episode *Private View*. They're the ones in the middle.

Previously, we've seen episodes set in a train carriage, a theatre dressing room, and even a wardrobe. Not to mention the wildly acclaimed near-silent episode, *A Quiet Night In*. The ambitious approach has paid off: *Inside No. 9* is a hit in not only the UK, but far-flung places such as China and Scandinavia. "It's got a real following of people who want to see what the hell we'll do next," says Pemberton. "As soon as people stop being surprised, we'll know we've plateaued."

Don't expect that to happen anytime soon. For their new batch of episodes, the pair have come up with six more uniquely twisted scenarios, featuring a stellar cast of guest stars from Felicity



Kendal to Peter Kay, the latter reteaming with Shearsmith and Pemberton for the first time since 2005's *The League Of Gentlemen's Apocalypse*.

One episode revolves around a cryptic crossword. Another — *Empty Orchestra* — is set entirely in a karaoke booth, with office workers expressing themselves through the songs they pick. “We were in a square box and it was hell for a week,” laughs Shearsmith, who had somehow managed to avoid the activity his entire life. “It’s a very unusual episode. And we all went a bit mad making it.”

Private View, meanwhile, sees a group of strangers trapped in an art gallery (main picture) that’s stuffed with

Top: A glimpse of the 1970s-set episode *The Devil Of Christmas*.

Above: Philip Glenister, Shearsmith, Jason Watkins and Pemberton take direction on an episode set in a restaurant.

creepy exhibits. “Who’s invited them? What’s the end-game?” teases Pemberton. “It’s the classic story, *And Then There Were None*-style.”

But the one they’re proudest of is *The Devil Of Christmas*. A tale of the Krampus, the half-goat, half-demon creature of Austrian folklore (“This was before the recent glut of Krampus movies,” says Pemberton), it’s set in an Alpine cabin and shot in a style that pastiches hammy armchair thrillers of the 1970s. “We sourced old cameras and filmed it in a way that’s not done anymore,” says Shearsmith. “It looks shit, but it’s brilliant.” **NICK DE SEMLYEN**

INSIDE NO. 9 IS ON BBC TWO IN THE AUTUMN.

THIS MONTH IN STAR WARS



1 VISITED!

April saw perhaps the most auspicious visitors yet to the set of *Episode VIII*, when Princes William and Harry rocked up at Pinewood for a day of larking about with John Boyega, Daisy Ridley, Mark Hamill and the new Chewbacca, Joonas Suotamo. We’d like a 3,000-word set visit report please, Harry, by next Friday.

2

RUMOURED!

Following Daniel Craig’s incognito appearance as stormtrooper JB-007 in *The Force Awakens*, the rumour mill suggests Rian Johnson may be pulling the same trick for *Episode VIII*. We won’t disclose the name of the actor who has reportedly already filmed his cameo, but let’s just say he has form when it comes to speaking while wearing a mask.

Okay, it’s Tom Hardy.

3

REVEALED!

The Rogue One: A Star Wars Story trailer provoked questions. Is Darth Vader in it? What do those cool new stormtroopers do? And who exactly is Felicity Jones’ Jyn Erso? Well, we now know that she’s the daughter of Mads Mikkelsen’s character, thanks to Mikkelsen himself. Rumour has it he will play an Imperial scientist. Which could give Jyn another reason to join the Rebel mission to steal the Death Star plans.

FIRST LOOK

APOCALYPSE MIAOW

KEY AND PEELE ARE COOL
CATS IN KEANU

NA HOT LOUISIANA day, *Empire* is in the grounds of a mansion with a huge outdoor fountain. It's the sort of place usually owned by cinematic drug

lords that winds up as the location for a full-on shootout. And, right on cue, a hail of bullets smashes into the wall of said fountain, while Jordan Peele, one half of arguably the hottest comedy duo right now, dives for cover and crawls on his belly to a safer position. "It's our tribute to *Scarface*," beams Peele's partner, Keegan-Michael Key. "But more grounded."

For the past five years, Key and Peele have worked on, well, *Key & Peele*, one of the sharpest sketch shows on US TV. Most comedy double acts, whether it's Morecambe & Wise, Pegg & Frost or Ant & Dec, eventually outgrow the small screen and head for the big. Which led Key, Peele and long-time director Peter Atencio to *Keanu*.

It's not, as you might suspect, a biopic of everyone's favourite

Above: Keegan-Michael Key, Jordan Peele and the unbearably cute Keanu. Below: The cat in a hat.

Beirut-born action star, but an action-comedy about a cat. Keanu is a precious kitten belonging to Peele's Rell. When he is catnapped, our hapless heroes — Peele a deadbeat stoner, Key an uptight family man — are plunged into a maelstrom of madcap misadventures and a deep appreciation of George Michael. "Given what we do," says Key, "it seemed logical to make our first movie a caper. It has kind of a *Fletch* feel to it." The duo's other inspirations range from *Heat* to *The Last Boy Scout*. "It's very close to how Keegan and I would act if we found ourselves in these circumstances," adds Peele, who co-wrote with Alex Rubens.

The decision to make the MacGuffin an adorable kitty was a no-brainer. "We knew the movie had to have heart," says Key. "Plus we thought we could make a billion dollars rather than a hundred million with a cute little kitten." The rationale for his name is less clear. "Keanu Reeves is the only guy we know called Keanu," explains Peele. "We figured the world deserved another one." Which is, perhaps, all the rationale you need. **SIMON BRAUND**

KEANU IS OUT THIS SUMMER.

LONDON
CALLINGTHE SUNDANCE FILM
FESTIVAL IS COMING
BACK TO THE UK

Sundance isn't just about snow, you know. This summer, the world's premier independent film festival is returning to the sunny* streets of England's capital city with Sundance Film Festival: London, and *Empire* is delighted to play a major part.

The Festival runs from June 2 to 5 at the Picturehouse Central in London's West End, and will showcase some fine upcoming indie films such as Todd Solondz' tall tale, *Wiener -Dog*, Jim Hosking's no-holds-barred horror *The Greasy Strangler*, and Clea DuVall's much-lauded *The Intervention*.

Empire will also be hosting our very own strand, Sundance Film Festival: Road To Stardom, which is dedicated to showcasing notable films that premiered at Sundance and gave fledgling talent room to shine. So we'll give you another chance to see *Blood Simple*, the darkly comic 1984 movie that put the Coens on the map; *The Usual Suspects*, which launched Bryan Singer, Christopher McQuarrie and Kevin Spacey into the stratosphere; and *Winter's Bone*, which marked the arrival of Jennifer Lawrence.

There will also be special events and masterclasses at the festival, with James Schamus, Ang Lee's long-time producing partner and former head of Focus Features, talking about the changing face of independent film.

It's a cracking line-up. For more info, and to book tickets and passes, go to www.sundance.org/london. Hope to see you there.

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ON-SET EXCLUSIVE

OPEN ALL HOURS

EMPIRE POPS DOWN THE SHOPS FOR KEN LOACH'S *I, DANIEL BLAKE*

↓
ET'S WAIT FOR this guy to buy his gas bill, then we can go again..." In a cramped Costcutter corner-shop in Newcastle upon Tyne suburb Fawdon, *Empire* looks on as Ken Loach directs his latest feature, *I, Daniel Blake*. Any other filmmaker would secure a closed set. Not Loach. The shop, incredibly, is *still open*. If you've ever wondered how his films feel so life-rich and authentically raw, here's your answer. Loach is stealing takes in-between the ringing of the shop's doorbell.

"Stealing" being the operative word. The scene being shot today — all day, as it turns out — is a grimly tense shoplifting sequence involving actress/playwright Hayley Squires as the luckless Katie Morgan. After paying at the till, she's confronted by a guard, marched to the stockroom and subjected to a humiliating interrogation by the manager. Tucked in the aisles between



Above and left: Daniel (Dave Johns) and Katie (Hayley Squires) form a fast if unlikely bond. Below: The man, the legend, Ken Loach.



the Winalot and the Tizer, *Empire* watches The Loach Process in action. There are no director chairs — Loach, 79, always works standing up. His cast are equally on their toes, improvising entire scenes but never quite certain when the cameras are rolling. As the sequence evolves, take after take, Loach's direction varies from, "One more like that," to more evocative cues. "Okay, Katie," Loach counsels Squires (he addresses her in character throughout the day). "When you get to the exit and the guard approaches, imagine a chasm suddenly opening up under you. Let's try that..." They try that. A local pops in to buy 20 B&H. Then they go again. Eventually, it's impossible to separate Squires' anxious performance from the customers wandering in and out of the shop.

That we're here at all is a surprise. Loach's last film, 2014's Ireland-set *Jimmy's Hall*, was intended to be exactly that — his last film. But just when he thought he was out, long-time screenwriting collaborator Paul Laverty pulled him back in with a story confronting issues slightly closer to home. So Loach downed the bus pass, turned off the *Countdown*, and picked up a megaphone. (Figuratively speaking; you couldn't swing a megaphone in this shop.)

I, Daniel Blake — which played at this year's Cannes Film Festival, where Loach won the Palme d'Or in 2006 for *The Wind That Shakes The Barley* — follows an unlikely alliance formed by two welfare victims. There's Dave Johns' titular Daniel, an unemployed joiner applying for social security after suffering a heart attack; and Squires' single-mum Katie, rehoused from her London hostel to a flat 300 miles away in Newcastle. Both find themselves snagged on what Loach calls "the barbed wire of bureaucracy". Exposing his characters to foodbank poverty and the slow-shrieking Kafka-esque nightmare that is the Employment And Support Allowance scheme, Loach's drama won't so much ruffle feathers as pluck the entire Establishment chicken, launching a counter-attack against "the vindictive striver-and-skiver rhetoric of modern Britain". In many ways, it feels like a summation of the themes that have preoccupied Loach since 1966's *Cathy Come Home*, and as such would prove a fitting last hurrah for a legend. But let's hope he stays open for business a little while longer. **SIMON CROOK**

I, DANIEL BLAKE IS OUT LATER THIS YEAR.



The way they were:
Sheryl Lee as Laura
and Kyle MacLachlan
as Agent Cooper.

THE TWIN PEAKS ?

THE SHOW REBOOT PUTS ITS CAST TOGETHER IN STYLE

THIS IS HOW YOU ANNOUNCE A CAST for a TV show — not with any great fanfare or hoopla, but with a simple list of 217 names in alphabetical order. Or at least, that's how you do it if the show in question is *Twin Peaks*, which will return to our screens next year. Here, we pick out the most intriguing names, old and new, on the list...

KYLE MACLACHLAN

The last time we saw MacLachlan's Special Agent Dale Cooper, the ostensible hero of the show when it first ran from 1990-'91, he was banging his head against a mirror and laughing maniacally, having been possessed by the spirit of Killer Bob. So he pretty much had to come back to close the loop on an all-time great TV cliffhanger.

ROBERT FORSTER

One name absent from the cast list was Michael Ontkean, who played Sheriff Harry S. Truman, the show's second lead. No reason has been given for Ontkean's absence, but the waters have been muddied further by suggestions that Truman could still be around — this time played by the ever-dependable Forster (right).

SHERYL LEE

The real wildcard. Even though *Twin Peaks* began with Laura Palmer already dead, Lee managed to play her before, during and after Laura's murder across the TV show and 1992's *Twin Peaks*:

Fire Walk With Me. Then there was that tricky dual role thing as she played Laura's (also doomed) cousin, Maddy. But does Lee's presence indicate we'll somehow see an older Laura? Ditto her tragic father, Leland — the great Ray Wise also returns.

MONICA BELLUCCI

The cast list boasts plenty of movie star names, including Amanda Seyfried and Jennifer Jason Leigh. The presence of Bellucci (below) is perhaps most intriguing of all. The sense of dark, dangerous glamour she embodies could be a perfect match for the show.

TRENT REZNOR

The Nine Inch Nails frontman, and movie composer par excellence, is a surprising addition to the line-up. His wife, Mariqueen, is also included, as is NIN guitarist Robin Finck. Oh, and Pearl Jam's Eddie Vedder. Might there be a live performance in store?

LAURA DERN

Despite being Lynch's favourite leading lady, Dern didn't appear in the original series. We're hoping that she gets at least one scene with MacLachlan. After all, a proper *Blue Velvet* reunion is surely too good to resist.

DAVID LYNCH

Not only is Lynch back as showrunner (with Mark Frost), his hard-of-hearing FBI agent, Gordon Cole, will return. **LOUD NOISES! CHRIS HEWITT**

TWIN PEAKS WILL AIR IN 2017.



FIRST LOOK EXCLUSIVE

THE GAMBLERS

IS ABSOLUTELY FABULOUS: THE MOVIE A SURE BET?

WE'VE BEEN ASKED for years," says *Absolutely Fabulous* star Joanna Lumley, "when are you going to do a film?"

Since ending its initial run on BBC One in 1995, Jennifer Saunders' much-garlanded sitcom has had more comebacks than a Frankie Boyle gig. A two-part special, *The Last Shout*, followed relatively quickly in 1996, there were two more series five years later, as well as three more specials including a Comic Relief skit, then a six-year break, and finally four more specials for the show's 20th anniversary in 2012. After that, a film seemed the next logical step, but it only

happened when Saunders — who created the show, wrote it and starred in it as PR from hell Edina 'Eddie' Monsoon — announced in 2014 she was writing it. And now *Absolutely Fabulous: The Movie* is almost here.

"A lot of people were making films out of TV shows," says Saunders, presumably referring to *Alan Partridge*, *Alpha Papa* and the *Inbetweeners* movies. "So it seemed possible. And it was actually interesting, because I'd never written a plot before. In a film, something has to happen over 90 minutes. You have to build a plot and all that other stuff. It's very difficult!"

That plot sees Eddie and her cohort, Lumley's futzed-up fashionista Patsy, on the run in France following a mishap

involving Kate Moss. But the excitement here will surely stem from the cavalcade of cameos (Jon Hamm! Cara Delevingne! Graham Norton!), and seeing Eddie and Patsy, as unapologetically debauched as ever, older but by no means wiser. Also, if all goes well, the question posed to Lumley and Saunders might become, "When are you going to do a sequel?"

"The truth is, we can go on being Patsy and Eddie for as long as we need to," says Lumley. "We could do *Ladies In The Van!*" laughs Saunders. "I could live in the house with Patsy living in the van, just asking to come in to use the toilet." Sold. **OLLY RICHARDS**

ABSOLUTELY FABULOUS: THE MOVIE IS OUT ON JULY 1.





Sennia Nanua is
'hungry' hybrid
Melanie. Awkward
with that mask on.

FIRST LOOK EXCLUSIVE

WELCOME GIFTS

ZOMBIE MOVIES GET A SHOT IN THE ARM FROM *THE GIRL WITH ALL THE GIFTS*



IT'S A BLUSTERY JUNE DAY IN SOLIHULL. Dark, overcast, with rain on the horizon. The perfect conditions, then, for the end of the world.

Here, behind a disused former Powergen building (now owned by a major supermarket chain) that's standing in for post-apocalyptic London, *Empire* watches as the remaining members of the cast of *The Girl With All The Gifts* — including Paddy Considine, Gemma Arterton, Glenn Close and young newcomer Sennia Nanua — gingerly pick a path through an overgrown patch of land. Danger lurks everywhere in the shape of infected humans known as 'hungries', but salvation lies at hand in the shape of Rosie, a giant mobile laboratory the group of survivors have tracked down. As chance would have it, Close's scientist, Caldwell, helped design the lab years ago, and manages to find a way in as night looms and the hungries stir...

Zombies, of course, are nothing new these days. You can't throw a stone without hitting a member of the walking dead. But Colm McCarthy's film promises to stand out from the herd. Mike Carey's screenplay, developed at the same time as his novel of the same name, is as preoccupied with asking big questions about humanity as it is setting up cool kills. Its focus lies not with the desperate survivors, but with Nanua's Melanie, a hybrid hungry/human who may hold the key to a brave new world. "As zombie movies go, it's a little bit different," says Considine, who plays a soldier trying to lead the group to safety after a shit/fan interface. "It's essentially about nature taking over again and reinventing the human race because we weren't quite good enough. I thought that was a cool message."

Then there's the cast — not the kind of actors you expect to find in a such a piece. "I've never done anything like this before," admits Considine. Ditto Close. Her most iconic screen roles may have involved boiling bunnies and trying to skin puppies, but she's outside her comfort zone. "I get too scared of movies like this," she laughs. "I don't go to horror films, they're just too frightening. But this was a brilliant take on the genre, so I had to do it. I'm just glad I know what happens in this!" The rest of us will have to be content with peeking through our fingers. **CH**

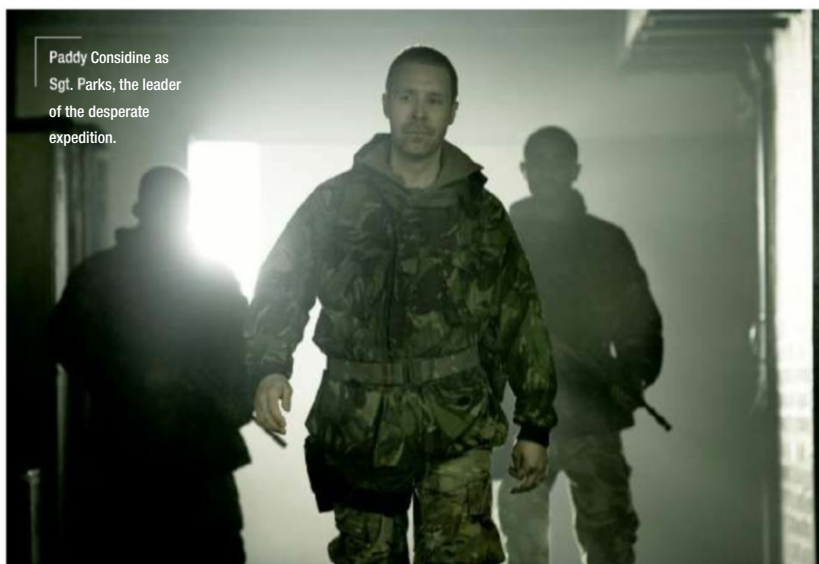
THE GIRL WITH ALL THE GIFTS IS OUT ON SEPTEMBER 9.



Gemma Arterton plays beleaguered teacher Miss Justineau.



Melanie and Glenn Close's Caldwell. Presumably they don't need an Oyster card.



Paddy Considine as Sgt. Parks, the leader of the desperate expedition.

What one thing do you do better than anyone else you know?

Procrastinate. I've accomplished quite a bit, but there are several more things where I think, why haven't I done that yet? We do torture ourselves.

Have you ever broken the law?

Oh, sure. I like to push the speed limit just a little. They call that being a 'scofflaw'. You bend the rules a little bit or there's a greyish margin. In the big way, if we're talking a capital crime? No.

Who was your first movie crush?

Ann-Margret. *Bye Bye Birdie*. The opening of that. I think I was about 12 and my mouth was agape. I have been looking for her ever since, right to the depths of my soul.

On a scale of one to ten, how hairy is your arse?

Not so bad. Probably about a three. My back is a ten, but my ass is sort of smooth and juvenile. It tapers off as it gets lower down, it's quite extraordinary. Who would have thought?

How much is a pint of milk?

Oh, I was going to say 16 ounces! Here in America it's about four bucks, so that would be £2.60? That's for a pint.

On a scale from one to ten, how famous are you?

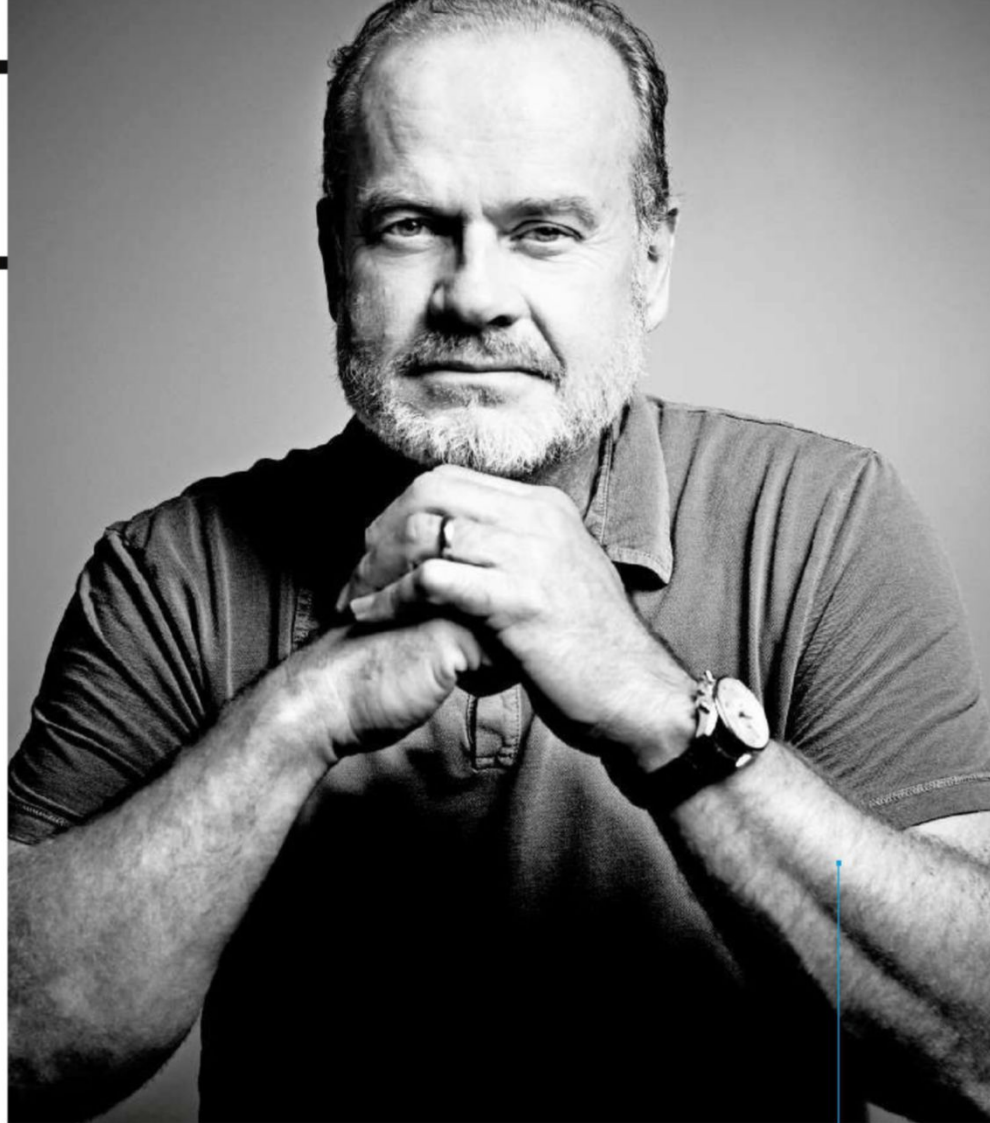
Let's just say it's a two. It would be a ridiculous question to answer, because if I'm ridiculously honest then I'm ridiculously egomaniacal. I prefer to stay with a two.

What character were you in your first school play?

I played Ben Hubbard in *The Little Foxes* by Lillian Hellman. It was a terrific performance. That's where I got my bug. "This I could do for the rest of my life."

What's your nickname?

Kels. Le Kels is another one. Woody Harrelson used to call me The Kels, The Man, The Myth, The Legend. There was another nickname I had for a while, Preppy Gone To Seed. That was from my buddy Richard Perkins, who said, "He looks like a preppy gone to seed." I know how to dress, it's just a little bit off.



HOW MUCH IS A PINT OF MILK?

Kelsey Grammer

HE'S LISTENING...

PORTRAIT MAARTEN DE BOER

When did you last care about money?

I am such a product of my grandfather, who survived the Depression. I care about money all the time... I've been divorced several times and who knows what sort of fortune I would have amassed if I had not? But then I wouldn't have found Kayte (*Walsh, his wife*), so I'm very happy where I am.

Do you have a favourite joke?

My most recent one is, "Why can't Stevie Wonder see his friends? Because he's married." It takes you by surprise because you're thinking, he can't possibly be telling a joke about blind people, can he?

When were you most starstruck?

Paul McCartney, a few years ago. The Beatles' music scored my teenage years. He introduced me to Nancy (*Shevell, McCartney's wife*), and *Rocky Raccoon* went instantly into my mind. (*Sings*) "She called herself Lil, but everyone knew her as Nancy." So I said, "Is your name really Lil?"

What did she say?

Nothing! (*Laughs*) There was a blank moment, then someone else came up and attacked me. It passed by, unremarked. **CHRIS HEWITT**

BREAKING THE BANK IS OUT ON JUNE 3.

DID YOU KNOW?

→ He played Frasier Crane on *Cheers* and *Frasier* for a combined total of 20 years.

→ He also played Frasier in a 1992 episode of *Wings*.

→ He's won five Emmys, three Golden Globes... and one Golden Raspberry.



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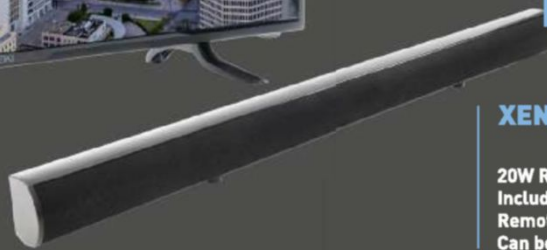


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REVIEWERS' CHOICE

THE EMPIRE MOVIE GUIDE | UNMISSABLE ★★ ★★ EXCELLENT ★★★★★ GOOD ★★★★★ POOR ★★ TRAGIC ★

X-Men: Apocalypse

★★★

OUT NOW / CERT. 12A / 144 MINS.

DIRECTOR Bryan Singer

CAST James McAvoy, Michael Fassbender, Jennifer Lawrence, Oscar Isaac, Nicholas Hoult, Kodi Smit-McPhee, Sophie Turner

PLOT When ancient mutant Apocalypse (Isaac) is awakened, he decides to bring down the world. Professor X (McAvoy) and his students must stop him.



BEFORE Apocalypse gets going bringing about, well, the apocalypse, students from Xavier's School For Gifted Youngsters sneak out to see *Return Of The Jedi*. "Well, at least we can all agree, the third one is always the worst," says Sophie Turner's Jean Grey afterwards, with startling prescience. But whether the remark is a dig at Brett Ratner's unlamented *The Last Stand* or a self-deprecating assessment of this lackluster second sequel to *First Class* isn't clear — like much of the storytelling here. The early scenes are promising,



with a structure that nods back — the first of many callbacks — to director Bryan Singer's first *X-Men*. This too opens with a flashback to historical mutant activity, followed by a teen developing traumatic abilities and a cage fight that leads to a mass brawl. But there's an immense number of existing characters to assemble and new characters to introduce, so for the rest of the first hour we're passed from one person to another at a zippy pace. Newcomers Cyclops (Tye Sheridan) and Nightcrawler (Kodi Smit-McPhee) are immediately charming, while Nicholas Hoult and James McAvoy slip seamlessly back into their roles, although the former has little to

actually work with — a perennial danger in a film with such a huge and talented cast, and such enormous ambitions.

Inevitably, not every character fares quite as well. Evan Peters' Quicksilver, so effective in *Days Of Future Past*, attempts to recapture the same unicorn but just seems stuck in time, not helped by some baffling choices that hamstringing his character's arc. Turner's Grey often comes across as unpleasant rather than insecure, while Jennifer Lawrence makes Mystique more unrelentingly grim than ever. This sombre freedom fighter lacks the slightest resemblance to Rebecca Romijn's kinky, sardonic killer or even Lawrence's own ballsy *First*

Oscar Isaac lets loose with the *Star Wars* theme again.

Class performance. She's just Katniss Everdeen with superpowers — which is a shame, because the movie could have used a little more kink, and a little less inspirational speechmaking.

But the big problems lie with the bad guys, Apocalypse and his Four Horsemen. Alexandra Shipp's Storm gets far too little to do given how well she does it, Ben Hardy's Angel makes no impact at all and Olivia Munn, as Psylocke, is ferocious but entirely without nuance. When we rejoin Michael Fassbender's Magneto, he's retired from plotting against humanity and lives in a rural idyll where he raises extraordinarily fluffy chickens with his lovely wife and daughter. You can



have three guesses what hackneyed development might lead him back to evil-doing. But you'll only need one.

But the worst on a number of levels is En Sabah Nur, or Apocalypse. He is an ancient and powerful mutant who can hop from one body to another, picking up fresh powers as he goes — which may explain why his abilities remain extraordinarily undefined. An opening lifted straight from *Stargate* sees the already-ancient being transferred into the body of a young Egyptian who looks just like Oscar Isaac, but only for a moment. Soon he's slathered with prosthetics, with a character design even Thanos would reject as unattractive. Isaac does his best to give some weight to proceedings and occasionally succeeds, but Apocalypse's precise beef with the 20th century remains unclear, and any ultimate goal beyond "power and punishment" rather nebulous. We're told that his great ability is to persuade mutants to his side, but even taking into account the damaged nature of those he targets, his arguments seem weak.

There are huge nits to pick elsewhere, too. Like *Jurassic World* last year, ultimate responsibility for releasing this titan actually lies with one of our ostensible heroes, although no-one ever acknowledges the fact. And the appalling climax of the film, when whole cities are blasted to



swirling, bloodless CG dust and their entire populations apparently vaporised, results in the death of millions of people who don't appear to warrant so much as a momentary look of horror. In a film that makes a point of recalling the Holocaust, that shows spectacularly bad taste.

Compared to the energetic, bold *Days Of Future Past*, it all seems so leaden. How many times can Professor Xavier remind us that there is good in Magneto — by now a mass-murderer several times over — before one of them pulls a lightsaber? How many overly familiar exhortations to heroism can Mystique really deliver and expect

Top: "The planetarium again?" Field trip woes for the X-crew.

Above: Storm waited for the pins and needles to pass.

to be taken seriously? And did they need to replay entire scenes we've seen multiple times before? Aside from a few moments with Nightcrawler — in his achingly perfect Thriller jacket and Flock Of Seagulls hair — there's no levity here, no tonal variation. The more the film harks back to other X-installments, the more you'll wish you were watching those instead.

HELEN O'HARA

VERDICT Messier and heavier than *Days Of Future Past*, this is not so much the next step in the X-Men's evolution as a failed callback to past glories.

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Something didn't feel quite right about this. Below: Russell was fiercely protective of his posh new motor.





The Nice Guys

★★★★

OUT JUNE 3 / CERT. TBC / 116 MINS.

DIRECTOR Shane Black

CAST Russell Crowe, Ryan Gosling, Margaret Qualley, Kim Basinger

PLOT Los Angeles, the 1970s. Washed-up private eye Holland March (Gosling) and hired enforcer Jackson Healy (Crowe) must team up to investigate the case of a missing girl (Qualley) and the connected death of a porn star.



AVING SQUATTED

on Shane Black's To Do list for years, it's only now, more than a decade since *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* and after he proved

himself able to work within the strictures of the Marvel Cinematic Universe — and make more than a billion for the studio in the process — on *Iron Man 3*, that *The Nice Guys* is out of a drawer and in the world. And thank goodness, because this is a fine addition to his mismatched-buddy-action-comedy canon.

The “buddies” here have less of a love-hate relationship, and more of a loathe-fear one. Ryan Gosling's ex-cop Holland March comes loaded with tragic family baggage and a propensity to become queasy at the sight of blood. Usually his own. Often sozzled, his hold

on morals is, at best, tentative, with only his daughter (Angourie Rice, smart-mouthed and wise) keeping him the right side of criminal.

Then there's Russell Crowe's Jackson Healy, a man frustrated by the way the world is spiralling out of control and struggling mightily to improve himself to find his place in it. He's got his own battle with the bottle, can't maintain a relationship with anything more than his pet fish and prefers to use force instead of words.

These are two men who should absolutely not spend time in each other's company, but are drawn together when Margaret Qualley's flighty Amelia asks Healy to warn off whoever is trying to dig out information about her. It turns out that person is in fact March, interested in how Amelia fits into the suspicious death of porn star Misty Mountains (Murielle Telio). Dragged into each other's orbit, they're soon unravelling a much bigger case when Amelia goes missing.

This pairing proves hilarious — Crowe is gruffly funny, while Gosling channels Buster Keaton-style physical comedy, best evidenced by a great stand-off involving a toilet stall. Yet amid all the madness, there's real feeling pulsing inside both the leads — they're damaged characters, but they don't necessarily wind up smoothing out their rough edges.

They could be a metaphor for the movie itself. Because though there's a healthy vein of absurdity at its core, Black doesn't skimp on its hard-bitten noir aspects, channelling such classics as *L.A. Confidential* (not too tough when you have Crowe and Kim Basinger swapping dialogue) and throwing in the requisite amount of toughs, thugs, femme fatales, conspiracies and criminal damage. But there's depth, too, with the director meditating on America's evolution through the '70s and the search for truth underneath the fading glamour that occupied the country in the years following the assassination of JFK. If it sometimes feels like it's bitten off more than it can chew, with the conspiracy plot a touch tangled, it doesn't affect the entertainment value by much as, thanks to a sharp script co-written with Anthony Bagarozzi, everything blends without leaving a sour taste. *The Nice Guys* will make you wish Shane Black made more movies, but feel grateful for the ones we have. **JAMES WHITE**

VERDICT Quick on its wits and fast with its fists, this is Black firmly back doing what he does best. And nobody out there does it better.





The Angry Birds Movie

★★

OUT NOW / CERT. U / 97 MINS.

DIRECTORS Clay Kaytis, Fergal Reilly

CAST Peter Dinklage, Jason Sudeikis, Sean Penn, Maya Rudolph

→ *The LEGO Movie* proved you could turn a potentially cynical cash grab into something with depth, humour and craft. This, however, takes the other approach: if it's easier to make a cynical cash grab, why not just do that? Sticking close to the plot of the game (such as it was), a group of birds set out to retrieve a batch of eggs stolen by some mischievous green pigs. Addictive as the original app was, it hardly screamed cinematic potential, and so it proves here, with corny jokes, baffling internal logic (why throw themselves rather than, say, rocks) and, perhaps worst of all, the birds are barely even angry. **JNU**



Embrace Of The Serpent

★★★★

OUT JUNE 10 / CERT. 12A / 122 MINS.

DIRECTOR Ciro Guerra

CAST Nilbio Torres, Antonio Bolivar, Jan Bijvoet, Brionne Davis

→ This haunting Oscar nominee tells of an Amazon shaman and his journey with two different German ethnologists, 40 years apart, in search of the sacred yakruna plant. Dissolving back and forth between the tales, it recalls *Heart Of Darkness* (as well as *Apocalypse Now*, of course) as it snakes upriver uncovering episodes — a one-armed man begging for death, a child-harming priest, a perverted Christ figure — that expose the horror accompanying civilisation's bloom. Though inspired by real-life journals, Guerra's film transports us into the realm of the mystical and surreal. **WL**



Alice Through The Looking Glass

★★★★

OUT MAY 27 / CERT. TBC / 108 MINS.

DIRECTOR James Bobin

CAST Johnny Depp, Anne Hathaway, Mia Wasikowska, Helena Bonham Carter, Sacha Baron Cohen

PLOT *Alice (Wasikowska) returns to Wonderland through a magic mirror to discover a dying Mad Hatter (Depp). Seeking the help of Time himself (Cohen), she embarks on a quest to save him.*



EST EASY: JOHNNY Depp's Mad Hatter does not body-pop in this sequel to Tim Burton's unexpectedly all-conquering 2010 *Alice In Wonderland*. Does that seem like a small thing? Perhaps, but it's one of the reasons this is a more enjoyable film. But only just — it's a narrow margin, and despite its financial success, the earlier film is hardly a classic.

This time we drop in on Alice (a spirited Mia Wasikowska) after some years spent adventuring on the high seas — a wildly implausible opening nautical chase bodes well. She returns home to a vaguely sketched commercial dispute, but before she gets in too deep, she's whisked back to Wonderland via the

looking glass of the title, where Depp's Mad Hatter is dying, haunted by how his family were killed by the Jabberwocky.

Quite why she embarks on her quest to save him, when Depp is almost as irritating as he was in the first film, is unclear, but he and fellow returning big-hitter Anne Hathaway (the White Queen) aren't around for long. Their lack of screen time would lend proceedings a somewhat half-hearted feel if they weren't making room for Sacha Baron Cohen as the personification of Time, from whom Alice must swipe a plot device to travel back to save the Hatter's family. And it's Cohen who elevates proceedings whenever he's on screen. Eccentric and funny, he makes the interesting choice of a Werner Herzogian German accent and lends individual lines a blend of menace, absurdity and demi-godly indifference. After the disaster of *Grimshy*, it's nice to have him back on form.

The person responsible for this is *Ali G* and *Flight Of The Conchords* man James Bobin, who continues the recent trend of TV comedy directors making surprisingly adept hands at tentpole juggernauts (see also the Russo brothers). His Wonderland looks familiar, but Time's castle — a gothic construction at the centre of a giant clock, populated by clockwork minions and containing impressive rooms of infinite hanging watches — is a design triumph. It's just a shame the film it decorates only occasionally enchants. **ANDREW LOWRY**

VERDICT Wasikowska gives it her all, and Cohen shines, but while this is a better film than the first, that was a low bar to reach.

It was like looking in a mirror.

Money Monster

★★★★★

OUT MAY 27 / CERT. 15 / 99 MINS.

DIRECTOR Jodie Foster

CAST George Clooney, Julia Roberts, Jack O'Connell, Caitriona Balfe, Dominic West

PLOT A popular finance show is hijacked during a live broadcast by Kyle Budwell (O'Connell), who lost everything after taking host Lee Gates' (Clooney) advice. As a tense situation unfolds, Budwell and Gates dig deeper into the truth...



ODIE FOSTER'S turn in Spike Lee's *Inside Man* is particularly memorable for the moment where her smirking villain is

called a "magnificent cunt". But it's clear now that the whole time she was being Madeleine White, she was also taking notes from Lee; watching and learning, for her fourth film as director is a similarly sweaty, tense, entertaining siege thriller. And if it's not quite as accomplished as Lee's movie, or its other key touchstones, *Dog Day Afternoon* and *Network*, it at least gets points for trying to clear some very high bars.

A world away from her previous directorial efforts *Little Man Tate*, *Home For The Holidays* and the blackly comedic *The Beaver*, *Money Monster* is the latest movie with the financial crash of 2008 on its mind. While it's not

specifically about that time, like *The Big Short* (indeed, it's clearly a present-day affair), it's a movie driven by a fair amount of anger about the mendacious money monsters who helped make it happen, or at the very least, turned a blind eye while it did.

Chief among those is the film's cartoon villain, Dominic West's unctuous master of the universe. The focus, however, is on Lee Gates (George Clooney, who also produces), a Jim Cramer-like host of a cable money show. A smug, self-absorbed smirker, Gates is a smart cookie who's long since stopped asking the big questions. We know full well that he'll have a Damascene conversion during the course of his ordeal on live television, but Clooney — who is very rarely off-screen — nails the modulation perfectly as he realises how empty and pointless his life is.

Although most of his time on screen is shared with Jack O'Connell (effectively intense, if not quite as sympathetic as

Clooney's stalking was way out of hand.

the obvious model for his character, Al Pacino's *Dog Day Afternoon* character, Sonny), he also has an interesting relationship with Julia Roberts, as his long-suffering director, in which they rekindle some of that old *Ocean's Eleven* chemistry despite communicating mostly via earpiece.

While *Money Monster* has little new to say — greed, as it turns out, is not good, and selfish TV show hosts should learn to cherish the little things in life — it enjoyably skips around from drama to thriller to media satire and back again. And when Clooney's this watchable, and the results are this much fun, interest rates are sure to rise. **CHRIS HEWITT**

VERDICT A fast-paced, entertaining, if somewhat on-the-nose mélange of thriller, satire, and drama, this is Jodie Foster's best movie as a director. And we'd happily watch any TV show George Clooney wants to host.

Bang Gang (A Modern Love Story)

★★★

OUT JUNE 17 / CERT. 18 / 96 MINS.

DIRECTOR Eva Husson

CAST Finnegan Oldfield, Marilyn Lima, Daisy Broom, Fred Hotier, Manuel Husson

→ If your interest in French films is based on assuming there will be nudity, you're in luck with this drama about French teens who throw sex parties. Beautifully shot, it suffers slightly for never deciding who its main character is. **JP**

The Boss

★★

OUT JUNE 10 / CERT. TBC / 99 MINS.

DIRECTOR Ben Falcone

CAST Melissa McCarthy, Kristen Bell, Peter Dinklage, Ella Anderson

→ Michelle Darnell represents the kind of boundary-free characters Melissa McCarthy does well. But, while the tale of a Trump-alike mogul rebranding after an insider trading scandal has a nice line in withering insults, the film is rarely worth your investment. **JW**

Breaking The Bank

★★

OUT JUNE 3 / CERT. TBC / 98 MINS.

DIRECTOR Vadim Jean

CAST Kelsey Grammer, Tamsin Greig, Mathew Horne, John Michael Higgins

→ Kelsey Grammer is a traditional banker who tries to battle back when first his bank collapses, followed swiftly by his world. A genteel comedy low on laughs but high on Grammer bumbling, it's not the worst thing to come out of the financial crash of 2008, but it's not far off. **WT**

ALSO
OUT



Where To Invade Next

★★★★

OUT JUNE 10 / CERT. TBC / 120 MINS.

DIRECTOR Michael Moore

CAST Michael Moore, Krista Kiuru, Tim Walker

→ Michael Moore returns with his first satirical feature documentary in seven years, although its title is misleading. Rather than investigating his country's aggressive foreign policy, he instead "invades" other nations (mostly European) to "steal" their best ideas (rather than, say, their oil) for the US. So from Italy he "steals" the progressive workers' rights (eight weeks' paid leave), from Finland its education (no homework, no standardised testing), from Norway its prison system (fervently rehabilitative), and so on. As ever, Moore's logic is at times questionable, his bias overwhelming and his narration aimed at Americans. But for all his occasional clumsiness, he makes strong points, and there is enough painful truth to make a British viewer feel embarrassed he found nothing worth stealing here. **DJ**



Versus: The Life And Films Of Ken Loach

★★★

OUT JUNE 3 / CERT. TBC / TBC MINS.

DIRECTOR Louise Osmond

CAST Ken Loach

→ Framed by Ken Loach's 2015 decision to come out of retirement for one final narrative feature, this documentary pays tribute to the firebrand behind *Cathy Come Home*, *Kes* and *Looking For Eric*. Fittingly downbeat but gently reverent, it reinstates both the significance of Loach's impact and what still makes his approach so radical. Director Louise Osmond plays it straight with plentiful interviews (including Gabriel Byrne, Cillian Murphy and Loach himself) that cover the 79 year-old director's '60s breakthrough, '80s wilderness (including a McDonald's ad) and resurgence as Cannes darling and political cage-rattler. *Versus* successfully underlines the impact of a contradictory man — polite, principled, ruthless — still influencing cinema today. **JF**



Gods Of Egypt

★

OUT JUNE 17 / CERT. 12A / 127 MINS.

DIRECTOR Alex Proyas

CAST Nikolaj Coster-Waldau, Gerard Butler, Brenton Thwaites

→ In the past, Alex Proyas has created seductive, gothic worlds, notably in *The Crow* and *Dark City*. He stumbles into the garish sun for this catastrophe, shining unkind light on a story both misconceived and poorly executed. In a fantasy Egypt where gods rule and most Egyptians are white with English accents, evil god Set (Gerard Butler) kills his brother Osiris, blinds Osiris' son Horus (Nikolaj Coster-Waldau) and steals his throne. With the help of a thief (Brenton Thwaites), Horus attempts to reclaim the crown and set his people free. The plot is lurid and camp, but Proyas tries to give it a weight it can't support, forcing dense mythology and leaving his action underdeveloped — most set-pieces involve our heroes jumping off a ledge and hoping for the best. It's not even spirited enough to be *enjoyably* awful. **OR**



The Trust

★★★

OUT MAY 27 / CERT. 15 / 92 MINS.

DIRECTORS Benjamin Brewer, Alex Brewer

CAST Nicolas Cage, Elijah Wood, Jerry Lewis

→ Academy Award-winner-turned-direct-to-video staple, Nicolas Cage gives one of his loosest, goofiest and flat-out funniest performances in years in this intriguing but tonally uncertain heist movie. Based on a true story, Cage and Elijah Wood star as a couple of low-level Las Vegas cops who devise an elaborate plan to relieve local criminals of their stashed cash by breaking into a near-impregnable vault hidden behind a nondescript storefront. The pair make for a surprisingly enjoyable double act (has *True Detective* Season 3 been cast yet?), and the heist itself is meticulously portrayed, but the film is arguably sunk by a seismic tonal shift that wipes the smile off the face and leaves a bad taste in the mouth. A shame, because before that there is much to enjoy. **DH**

DID YOU KNOW?

Gerard Butler graduated with a law degree from the University of Glasgow in 1992.



DID YOU KNOW?

Johnny Ramone was Nicolas Cage's best man at his 2002 wedding to Lisa Marie Presley.





Elvis & Nixon

★★★

OUT JUNE 24 / CERT. 15 / 86 MINS.

DIRECTOR Liza Johnson

CAST Michael Shannon, Kevin Spacey, Alex Pettyfer, Johnny Knoxville, Colin Hanks, Evan Peters

PLOT Elvis Presley (Shannon) requests a top-secret meeting with President Nixon (Spacey), in the hope of turning kids away from drugs. It really happened.



IT'S ONE OF THE odder political summits of the 20th century. In December 1970, Elvis Presley, rock god, showed up at the White House to meet President Richard Nixon, dorky crook-in-waiting. There he pledged to assist in America's war on drugs and requested the secret position of "undercover Federal Agent-At-Large", which answers the question of what

you give the man who has everything. This frothy lark imagines what might have happened when these two minds met.

The balance of the film is not quite as the title suggests. It's more Elvis less Nixon, with the President only dropping into the plot intermittently before the Oval Office encounter. Mostly we follow The King, a man whose immense fame has turned him into a cartoon of his public image. He's forgotten how to be normal. He's out of place with everyday people, with his giant gold belts and sunglasses emblazoned with his own initials, as if people won't know.

Elvis is played, surprisingly, by Michael Shannon. Shannon is not really convincing as the popular image of Elvis. Physically, he looks about as much like him as he does Janis Joplin, and speaks in an uncertain mutter, rather than that 'thangyavermuch' honk. Yet his version of Elvis is magnetic, a man with an ordinary mind and an extraordinary presence. If Liza Johnson's direction sometimes feels in need of a bit more swagger and a swifter edit to match the madcap adventure, she does manage to coax performances that make humans out

"I look nothing like Nixon? Funny, you look nothing like Elvis."

of men remembered as caricatures. Kevin Spacey, as Nixon, pulls up short of the jewel-shaking cliché to show an old man baffled by, but not immune to, celebrity.

The two don't meet for almost an hour, but it rewards the wait. The comic opportunities are many and hilariously exploited, and there's smart play on the two different kinds of power on display here. In Nixon there's a man who is in the highest office in the world, yet has little connection with the public. In Elvis, you have one who causes people to short-circuit with glee wherever he goes, but it's an empty power. The petty ways in which they try to exert authority over each other are fascinating, like a battle for supremacy simmering over who gets to touch the President's snack selection. There's so much to mine when the two are together that you wish the film had got there sooner. A little less action, a little more conversation, please. **OLLY RICHARDS**

VERDICT There's not a lot of consequence to this bizarre meeting, or really the film, but as a character study of two men alone at the top, it's both very funny and quietly astute.

Misconduct



OUT JUNE 3 / CERT. 15 / 105 MINS.

DIRECTOR Shintaro Shimosawa
CAST Josh Duhamel, Anthony Hopkins, Al Pacino, Malin Akerman

PLOT A hotshot Louisiana lawyer (Duhamel), building a case for his boss (Pacino) against a crooked pharmaceutical tycoon (Hopkins), gets drawn into a twisted world of blackmail, corruption and murder.



N THEIR illustrious 40-year-plus film careers, Al Pacino and Anthony Hopkins have never had the pleasure of trading creatively unhinged monologues on screen. This legal drama, almost impressive in its fumbling ludicrousness, marks their first time appearing together. And also, you'd venture, represents the pinnacle of all wasted casting opportunities.

At some stage there may have been the ghost of a decent premise here. Briskly plotted early scenes introduce us to Arthur Denning (Hopkins with a slick of white hair and almost Trumpian hauteur) — an impossibly wealthy pharmaceutical boss weathering a storm of allegations about the grisly side effects of his products and also dealing with the apparent kidnap of his young girlfriend Emily (Malin Akerman). A flashback then reveals that, before

her disappearance, Emily had handed information about Denning to her ex-boyfriend Ben Cahill (Duhamel, sporting a crinkled brow and able to speak only in plot-clarifying questions), a hotly ambitious lawyer hoping to both please his boss Charles Abrams (Pacino, all Bayou courtliness and expensive tailoring) and also stay faithful to his wife Charlotte (Alice Eve, not quite selling the emotional bruises of a recent trauma).

So, yeah, not a bad framework for a mash-up of a Grisham-esque potboiler and a *Fatal Attraction*-style thriller. The problem is, almost nothing works. When it isn't ticking off implausible twists a telenovela writer would dismiss as too far-fetched, the script is weighed down by huge dumps of exposition and head-in-hands first-draft clunkers ("Be as calm as ice," advises a detective at one point).

The obtrusive score — all jagged violins and sinister percussion —

"We're both ordering hard-boiled. End of discussion."

perhaps points to the overheated, knowing noir *Misconduct* hoped to be. But first time director Shintaro Shimosawa can't locate a consistent tone or marshal the deepening violent mystery. What's more, later scenes — in a desperate bid to raise the stakes — show a depressing propensity for doling out physical cruelty to female characters and, as the whole thing flails to an unintentionally hilarious conclusion nicked from *Gone Girl*, Shimosawa's camera never ceases its odd habit of tilting and sliding like a distracted drunk. Add to that the fact that Hopkins and Pacino share only the briefest of scenes and that title starts to feel like a damning verdict, hidden in plain sight. **JIMI FAMUREWA**

VERDICT Muddled, risible and overstuffed with twists — this is an amateurish puzzlebox thriller that criminally squanders a tantalising first meeting of two big Hollywood beasts.

Remainder

★★★

OUT JUNE 24 / CERT. 15 / 103 MINS.

DIRECTOR Omer Fast
CAST Tom Sturridge, Arsher Ali, Cush Jumbo, Ed Speleers

→ An intriguing conceit gets increasingly cryptic in this slick but never entirely convincing adaptation of Tom McCarthy's novel about an amnesiac desperate to piece together his past. At times it's compelling, but it's hard to empathise with its narcissistic protagonist. **DP**

The Measure Of A Man

★★★★

OUT JUNE 3 / CERT. TBC / 93 MINS.

DIRECTOR Stéphane Brizé
CAST Vincent Lindon, Karine de Mirbeck, Matthieu Schaller, Catherine Saint-Bonnet

→ Filmed in relentlessly long slice-of-life takes with a non-professional cast, Vincent Lindon exudes downtrodden decency in this laudably unmelodramatic study of the soul-destroying struggle to find work in recessionary France. **PP**

Holding The Man

★★

OUT JUNE 3 / CERT. 15 / 128 MINS.

DIRECTOR Neil Armfield
CAST Ryan Corr, Craig Stott, Anthony LaPaglia, Kerry Fox

→ A committed cast is let down by stagy scripting and lacklustre direction in this sincere, but superficial adaptation of Australian actor Tim Conigrave's memoir of his romance with John Caleo. Lacking a sense of the stigmas of being gay in the '80s, this feels flat and old-fashioned. **DP**

ALSO
OUT



When Marnie Was There

★★★

OUT JUNE 10 / CERT. U / 103 MINS.

DIRECTOR Hiromasa Yonebayashi

CAST Sara Takatsuki, Kasumi Arimura, Nanako Matsushima (Japanese subtitled version)/Hailee Steinfeld, Kiernan Shipka, Geena Davis (English dub)

PLOT To ease her asthma, 12 year-old Anna (Takatsuki/Steinfeld) is sent to live in a quiet coastal community. While there, she meets a strange girl named Marnie (Arimura/Shipka) — her first-ever friend.

IN THIS WORLD, there's an invisible magic circle," narrates 12 year-old Anna as she gazes forlornly at all the children playing gleefully around her. "They're inside. I'm outside."

Anna sees herself as a misfit — orphaned, unwanted and utterly alone. But if you're a fan of Studio Ghibli, it's hard not to feel she's speaking for the revered Japanese animation house, too. Especially as *When Marnie Was There* is set to be the studio's final feature. That "magic circle" contains dozens of pristinely computer-animated works: mostly action-packed comedy adventures, precision-engineered by US studios for global success. Outside the circle there is Ghibli.

Hiromasa Yonebayashi's *When*

Marnie Was There is in many ways an appropriate swansong for the 31 year-old studio. It is resolutely 2D, hand-drawn and painted, with the attention to detail that typifies Ghibli. Each frame blooms with life, whether it's nature ambling gorgeously around in the background or the fascinating clutter of someone's home. It makes little concession to a foreign audience, relocating its Joan G. Robinson-written, Norfolk-based source material to the Japanese coast, and that country's unique routines and festivals. And it is neither an action-adventure nor a comedy, dealing entirely with a girl on the cusp of adolescence who is suffering from both asthma and depression.

Despite Anna's journey of self-salvation occasionally taking her into a ghost-world (or arguably a very detailed hallucination) where she befriends Marnie, there are none of the spectacular, phantasmagoric elements that characterise Ghibli's most popular films, and as such, *Marnie* is less instantly compelling. It's a heartfelt story, but harder to recommend to anyone other than the most fervent fans of the studio.

It is a shame to see Ghibli bow out with one of its lesser — or destined-to-be-lesser-seen — pictures. Although this is just the kind of film that has marked the studio out: uncompromising, thoughtful, putting craft above commerce, and unafraid to be something other than pure children's entertainment. And that is something we'll sorely miss. **DAN JOLIN**

VERDICT An intimate, emotional journey, which may lack the scope and scale of previous Ghibli adventures, but remains a bittersweet *sayonara* for the studio.

The Blair Witch struck again.



Tale Of Tales

★★★

OUT JUNE 17 / CERT. TBC / 133 MINS.

DIRECTOR Matteo Garrone

CAST Salma Hayek, Toby Jones, Vincent Cassel, John C. Reilly

→ Adapted from the fairy tales of 16th-century Neapolitan poet Giambattista Basile, and featuring an ogre, a sea-dragon and a flea the size of a cow, it's fair to say *Tale Of Tales* represents a surprising change of pace for Matteo Garrone, still best known for his Mafia-drama debut, *Gomorrah*. This is also his first English-language movie, featuring stars such as John C. Reilly, Salma Hayek and Toby Jones as it flits between a trio of opulently rendered stories about royal types whose unchecked desires bring them grief. The result is unevenly structured and downright bizarre, but it is at least never dull, and maintains a baroque visual appeal throughout. **DJ**



Me Before You

★★★

OUT JUNE 3 / CERT. 12A / 110 MINS.

DIRECTOR Thea Sharrock

CAST Emilia Clarke, Sam Claflin, Jenna Coleman, Charles Dance

→ Sam Claflin plays a paralysed man who romances the help in this weepie based on Jojo Moyes' novel. After a devastating accident, Will (Claflin) becomes reclusive and gruff, especially with the staff hired by his parents (Janet McTeer and Charles Dance). The latest is former waitress Louisa (Emilia Clarke), whose perky traits irritate Will — initially, at least. Unfortunately, Louisa is likely to irritate audiences throughout: she's a caricatured Bridget Jones pretender whose pratfalling sits oddly with the story's mawkish tone. Claflin is good and the ending packs a punch, but overall it's an awkward mix of melodrama and attempted broad comedy. **ALS**



Blood Orange

★★★

OUT JUNE 7 / CERT. 15 / 84 MINS.

DIRECTOR Toby Tobias

CAST Iggy Pop, Kacey Barnfield, Ben Lamb, Antonio Magro

PLOT Ageing rocker Bill (Pop) lives in Spain with his trophy wife, Isabelle (Barnfield). He's losing his sight, but still has his wits about him, which proves crucial when a vengeful old flame pays a visit.



HE SCORCHING Spanish sun glints on the surface of a pristine pool, as a man of a certain age basks in the peace and quiet of a well-earned

retirement. So far, so *Sexy Beast*. But a snake is about to enter this hillside paradise and much blood will be spilt before tranquility returns.

That snake is Lucas (Ben Lamb). He descends on the idyllic hideaway to challenge Isabelle (Kacey Barnfield), who is both his ex-stepmother and ex-lover. The source of his indignation? She married his ailing father just before he died, robbing him of his inheritance. Forever making furtive phone calls home, Lucas thinks he can drive a wedge between her and her new husband, reclusive rock legend Bill (Iggy Pop,

hardly playing against type), because of their one-time fling, and because he knows she's sleeping with the pool boy. But Lucas proves to be a poor judge of character, and the terminally ill Bill delights in luring him into a fiendish trap of his own.

Seasoned commercials and music video director Toby Tobias got the idea for his debut feature while watching age-gap couples dining. In addition to pondering the roles of love and sex in such unions, he also got to thinking about whether inherited wealth is a blessing or a burden.

Few rockers have been able to act as well as they sing, but Pop will surprise many with his terse display as a half-blind rock god refusing to succumb meekly to leukaemia. Although he has taken the odd supporting role over the years, this is Pop's first lead, and he growls out his lines with a laconic assurance that the cocksure interloper mistakes for complacent weakness. Lamb conveys a persuasive sense of brattishly embittered entitlement, while Barnfield sugar-coats her gold-digging promiscuity with a disarming affection for her pragmatic spouse. The dialogue might have been wittier, but Tobias makes the most of the atmospheric setting and twists the plot so that even the signposted denouement comes as something of a surprise. **DAVID PARKINSON**

VERDICT: Slickly staged and shot, this neo-noir deftly exploits its clichés. It's hardly original, but it teasingly intrigues, while Iggy Pop steals every scene.

Kacey Barnfield's trophy wife gives Iggy Pop's Bill a new lust for life.



The Keeping Room

★★

OUT JUNE 17 / CERT. 15 / 95 MINS.

DIRECTOR Daniel Barber

CAST Brit Marling, Hailee Steinfeld, Muna Otaru

→ Making a change from home-invasion thrillers, here's a homestead-invasion instead. It's 1865, the final year of the Civil War, and on a South Carolina farm two sisters (Marling and Steinfeld) and a slave (Otaru) find themselves forced to fend off two violent rogue soldiers. Director Daniel Barber, following up *Harry Brown*, ladles on the doomy visuals with desolate landscapes akin with *The Walking Dead*. But while it's an effective mood piece, the dialogue scenes are leaden and the characters lack much spark. Even more grievously, the raccoon attack that kickstarts the plot happens off-screen. **NDS**



The Silent Storm

★★★★

OUT NOW / CERT. 15 / 102 MINS.

DIRECTOR Corinna McFarlane

CAST Damian Lewis, Andrea Riseborough, Ross Anderson

→ Andrea Riseborough is magnificent in this eerie, beautifully shot drama set on a remote Scottish island in the 1950s. She's Aislin, the sad, distant wife of a bible-bashing minister (Lewis) who's being driven even more insane by the departure of his flock. Aislin's world brightens considerably when a juvenile offender (Anderson) is sent to live with them. Lewis overplays it — all yelling and fire and brimstone — but Riseborough's soulful, sensitive turn holds the interest and helps build erotic tension with newcomer Anderson. Unanswered questions abound, but it's fun trying to figure out the answers. **ALS**

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Race

★★★

OUT JUNE 3 / CERT. PG / 135 MINS.

DIRECTOR Stephen Hopkins

CAST Stephan James, Jason Sudeikis, Carice van Houten, Jeremy Irons, William Hurt

PLOT Speedy youngster Jesse Owens (James) has a shot at competing in the 1936 Berlin Olympics. But an injury, romantic trouble and Nazi machinations all threaten his path to glory.



THE STORY *RACE* tells is a significant one: black athlete Jesse Owens boldly competes at the Nazi-hosted Olympics, despite

animosity from the *Heil Hitler*-ing crowds and, indeed, many racist Americans. But for a film about a sprinter, it plays out more like a leisurely jog. It feels as if the filmmakers were awed by the subject matter; what they've made is stuffed with incident, as if they were afraid to leave anything out. While there's plenty of good material here, it could have done with a sharper focus.

That applies particularly to the first half. Detailing Owens' poverty-stricken background, his troubled relationship with a beautician and his training regime, it rambles around

with little momentum. Stephan James, a last-minute replacement for a *Star Wars*-bound John Boyega, delivers an excellent lead performance, exuding quiet dignity and laser-focused ambition, while Jason Sudeikis is decent in a rare serious role as his coach. It's Sport Movie Clichés a-go-go, though: this is the kind of film where it rains during sad moments, where letter-writing montages are accompanied by earnest voiceovers, where everyone talks in taglines.

Fortunately, the tension ratchets up considerably as the Nazis enter the picture. A fascinating subplot sees a hotelier (Jeremy Irons) sent to negotiate the Games' planning with Goebbels (Barnaby Metschurat, masterfully creepy). And once the event begins, the movie kicks up a gear — *Chariots Of Führer* if you will. It delves into the making of *Olympia*, the propaganda documentary filmed by Leni Riefenstahl (Carice van Houten), and the political tussles behind the scenes: Owens is at one point snubbed by Hitler with the very lamest of excuses: "Traffic."

It's here in the final lap that *Race* finds its stride, with memorable moments (Jesse's entrance into the stadium is brilliantly shot) and some heart-stirring sequences. It's just a shame it meanders around so much en route. **NICK DE SEMLYEN**

VERDICT A great true-life story is hobbled by some hoary screenwriting, but the tense second half makes going the distance just about worth it.

In your face, fascism.

AT A GLANCE



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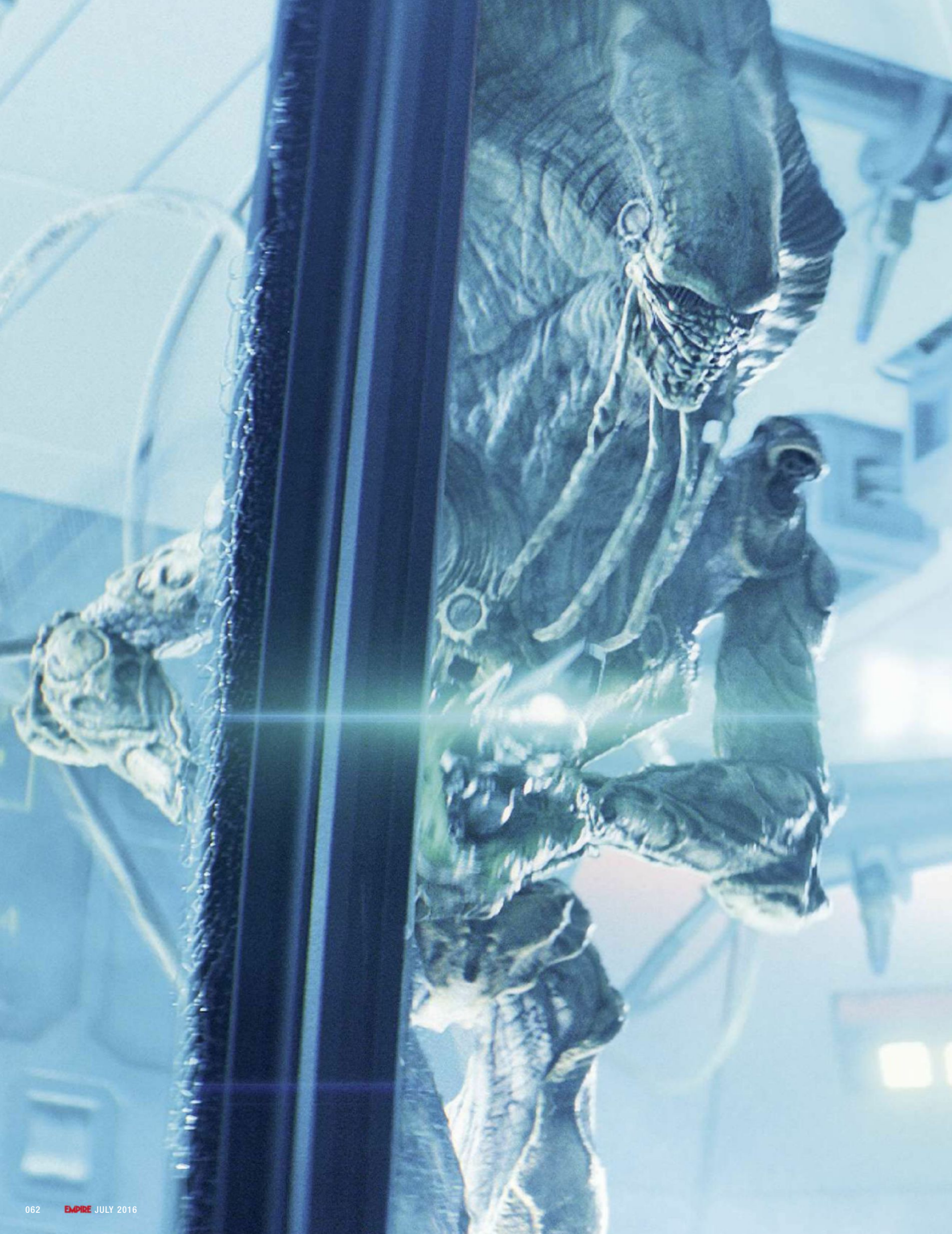
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DAYS OF

It's two decades since director Roland Emmerich oversaw a world-trashing alien invasion and redefined event cinema. Now he's finally brought the mothership back: and this time, he's really letting rip

WORDS ADAM SMITH

RECKONING



ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO. AUGUST 2015

In a vast, bluescreen-bedecked hangar on a blazing hot morning, Dr. Brakish Okun (Brent Spiner) is giving an impassioned speech. The chief scientific advisor to Earth Space Defense (ESD) — and apparent survivor of his mauling-by-extraterrestrial in the original *Independence Day* movie — closes the presentation on his strategy for dealing with the latest interstellar invasion of our home world.

“... And then we’ll *ram it right up her royal wazoo!*” he yells, his greying hippie locks flying about impressively.

This, it has to be said, is a suspiciously familiar plan — the ramming of it wazoowards being a tactic instantly recognisable to anyone who has seen *Independence Day*. But then, it all adds to what is becoming, for *Empire*, an undeniably pleasing sense of *déjà vu*.

The atmosphere on set of *Independence Day: Resurgence* is akin to the winding down of a long-awaited high-school reunion. Bill Pullman as former President Whitmore, now grizzled and walking with a cane, paces back and forth rehearsing his big speech for later in the afternoon (“We will not go gently into that good night!”); Jeff Goldblum, returning as computer expert

David Levinson, chats with the movie’s fresh-faced writers, James A. Woods and Nicolas Wright; while director Roland Emmerich bustles back and forth with the air of a proud teacher delighted to see that the class of ’96 went on to really *make* something of themselves.

“Yeah, I’ve done pretty well,” laughs Goldblum. “I was an underachiever in the first movie — according to my dad (played by Judd Hirsch) anyway. But I’ve been promoted to the directorship of ESD, so I’ve now become responsible for the protection of the planet. Many of our cities are in ruins, three billion people have been lost. Even if it’s for fun and entertainment value, that’s a deep and provocative thing to act.”

Though *Resurgence* is, it turns out, as much a tale of a generational handover as it is a reunion, with Goldblum and the original cast — minus Will Smith, more of whom later — being goosed with an infusion of fresh new blood, including Liam Hemsworth and Jessie Usher (playing Smith’s stepson Dylan Hiller) as rival fighter pilots. Facing all of them is the knowledge of the original invaders’ inevitable return. As the hostile space bugs use wormhole technology, co-producer Harald Kloser explains, the initial retreat was (for them) only a few days long. But it has given humanity a full two decades to regroup and prepare. The world has established fortifications on the moon and learned how to use, if not manufacture or repair, the organic anti-gravity alien technology that now litters the planet. Thus the soundstage is dotted with familiar-looking fighter aircraft, all of which have lumps of very unfamiliar alien tech glommed to their sides.

Emmerich explains that, in part, he was compelled to finally revisit the film that made his career 20 years earlier by recalling what he’d learned from his parents about their real-world war experience. “How big an impact World War II had,” he says. “There was this whole, ‘Let’s pull together, let’s show the world what we can do’ attitude. Will Smith is the biggest hero in the world to this new ‘can do’ generation: he saved the world, but he is dead (*Smith’s character, Captain Steven Hiller, was killed in early attempts to use the alien’s anti-gravity technology*). Now battle preparations are not going so well. The veterans of the first attack are thinking, ‘Have we foolishly let our children believe they are about to fight a war they can win?’ ‘Can they?’ That generational story has a dynamic which is really interesting to me.”



Oh, the humanity! The evidence suggests the aliens are once again not your peace-types.

Mark Twain supposedly said, “History doesn’t repeat itself, but it does rhyme.” Twain was likely not thinking about vast flying saucers, but that seems to be the aim here. “Yeah,” says Emmerich. “That’s the idea. The same. But completely different.”

THE WHITE HOUSE, WASHINGTON, D.C.. JUNE 1996

The family theatre at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue has, over the years, hosted screenings of *Midnight Cowboy* (Jimmy Carter going X-rated), *Patton* (a firm favourite of Richard Nixon) and *Meet The Parents* (enjoyed by George W. Bush and visiting British PM Tony Blair). In late June, 1996, the 40-seat theatre was the venue for an impromptu early screening of *Independence Day*. And its most important audience member was keen to get things started.

“Hey, guys,” President Clinton called from the front to a group of late arrivals as the lights dimmed, “I got a spare seat up here, anyone want to join me?”

“Dean (*Devlin, producer*) said he couldn’t do it because he was just too excited,” recalls Bill Pullman, who had only been told he would be heading to



Jessie Usher, Ryan Cartright and Liam Hemsworth join the battle for civilisation.



Washington a few hours earlier. “And Roland said, ‘No, it can’t be me. I’m a German, that would be all wrong, it should be an American.’ So in the end I wound up going up to the front and watching it next to the President.”

And so the fake President of the United States sat next to the real President of the United States as they watched the fake White House explode. In the real one.

The fact the leader of the free world was eager to get in an early viewing of *Independence Day* was testament to the almost deafening buzz that by that time surrounded Emmerich’s cinematic dark horse. Up until the start of the year, the film, which had been shot in the summer of ’95, had been all but invisible. When *Premiere* magazine had published its annual list of blockbusters to watch out for in 1996, *Independence Day* didn’t even make the top ten. But with a guerrilla marketing campaign overseen by 20th Century Fox executive Tom Sherak, it had suddenly exploded into the public consciousness on January 28 with the innovation of a 60-second Super Bowl trailer, which climaxed with that now-iconic image of the White

House being laser-beamed into oblivion. After the film’s hugely successful release on July 2, it would even make the covers of *Newsweek* and *Time*, the latter announcing, “Sci-Fi Makes A Comeback”.

That “comeback” began while Emmerich was on publicity duties for 1994 sci-fi adventure *Stargate*, his second film with producer Dean Devlin. He was struck by the notion of waking up one morning and seeing a 15-mile-wide flying saucer over the city. But it was a vision for which he figured it would be impossible to secure a big enough budget. Then, soon after, he was offered a Harrison Ford prison-escape movie by Warner Bros. (which was never made). “At one point in the meeting I asked (Warner exec) Lorenzo di Bonaventura, ‘How expensive is this movie?’ And he said it was about \$75 million. I said, ‘What! For a prison-escape movie?’”

After the meeting, the stunned director pondered the amazing amounts of cash that seemed to be sloshing around Burbank’s boardrooms. If they’d spend that amount on a prison escape film, surely they’d give him the same to build his giant flying saucers?

For Devlin, though, the idea of a simple alien-invasion flick was curiously un compelling. “I was actually very resistant,” he says. “I didn’t really get what would differentiate it from other movies. Then one day I said to Roland, ‘What if instead of telling the story like an alien-invasion movie, we tell it like a disaster movie, and we treat the invaders like they were the impending disaster?’”

For Emmerich, the idea was a master stroke. Both he and Devlin were fans of ‘Master Of Disaster’ Irwin Allen’s ’70s movies, such as *The Poseidon Adventure* (1972) and *The Towering Inferno* (1974), which threw big ensemble casts into situations of extreme calamity. In fact, the pair sat down and rewrote the latter, starring Steve McQueen and Paul Newman, which they readily admit is as much a template for *Independence Day* as *War Of The Worlds*.

“You could literally put *Towering Inferno* on top of *Independence Day* and say, ‘Oh, Steve McQueen showed up at the 40-minute mark — and look, here’s Will Smith!’” says Devlin. “We only called Will’s character Steve Hiller because his character was modelled on McQueen’s.”

Independence Day was, it seems, a tightly wound double-helix of Hollywood borrowings: aliens from the 1950s, and 1970s ensemble peril. But the secret sauce would be the selling of the movie, in a meticulously planned campaign that began from the project’s



very inception.

"That whole movie *was* a marketing campaign," insists Emmerich. "I mean, when we originally sent the screenplay out, the title page just said 'The World Ends July 4th.'" Devlin and Emmerich went as far as to pitch the White House-destruction teaser along with the film itself, though Devlin recalls one executive at Fox balking at the idea, worried that it would be offensive to audiences. "Well," Emmerich reasoned with him, "in that case it will be very controversial, and how is that supposed to be a *bad* thing?"

The gamble, if it ever were really that, paid off. "That single TV spot put us on the map," Emmerich says. Though he soon felt the pressure of expectation as public anticipation for the film grew. Sherak kept telling him, "Roland, you know this is not a movie now. It is a *phenomenon*!" It didn't help. "I was totally afraid," Emmerich recalls. "I didn't want to make a *phenomenon*. I just wanted to make a good movie..."

Goldblum remembers seeing that first trailer in January '96, while he was at a Super Bowl party. "Gee, this is interesting," he said to himself, noting the ecstatic reaction of those around him when the White House blew. Months later, as he sat alone in a 20th Century Fox screening room and watched the finished product alone, he thought, "Well, that turned out nicely." But then, when he saw

it again with an audience, he recalls now, "you could see how it really *worked*. It kind of reversed that 1970s idea that aliens would be friendly. It was the anti-*E. T.* or *Close Encounters*. I remember the cheers during that sequence where the Los Angeles people gather and are all, 'Come on in, take us up, I'm sure you're friends'... And, well, they had bad news for us. Nincompoops! Too trusting, too naive..."

The film went down well at that White House screening, too. "He said he had enjoyed it," says Pullman of Clinton's reaction to *ID4*. But if Clinton had a burning desire to find out what happened next, he would have to wait a while. Indeed, by the time Emmerich and Devlin declared themselves ready to make a sequel, Clinton's wife would be running for his old job.

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA. APRIL 2016

"Why get into the sequel game at all?" coughs a tired-sounding Roland Emmerich in his editing suite. "That is *exactly* the question I am asking myself."

Much has changed in the intervening 20 years, but the gruelling production schedule, culminating in a hectic sprint to the finish line, isn't one of them. If anything, the age of CGI has made things worse. There are five weeks left until Emmerich has to lock the print of *Independence Day: Resurgence*, and there



Jeff Goldblum's David Levinson is back, as is a certain Presidential gaff. (Check out the reflection.)



Brent Spiner goes full barnet as Dr. Brakish Okun.

THE ALIEN INVASION SURVIVAL KIT

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO REPEL THE (MOVIE)
UNIVERSE'S BIGGEST EARTH-BADGERING THREATS

WORDS DAN JOLIN

[1] A BOTTLE OF WATER

Destroys: Those nasty, gangly green men in M. Night Shyamalan's *Signs* (2002). Burns 'em right up like a wicked witch from Oz, and stops them leaving annoying crop circles all over the place.

[2] HEAD & SHOULDERS SHAMPOO

Destroys: The super-evolving aliens of *Evolution* (2001). The hair-care product's active ingredient, selenium sulfide, is poisonous to these nitrogen-based beasts, you see.

[3] SNOTTY TISSUES

Destroys: Martians. As in the heat ray-wielding horrors of *The War Of The Worlds* (1953). Just wave those crusty snot-rags about and they'll fall dead... Well, eventually, after several days of worldwide destruction.

[4] SALT

Destroys: The admittedly unthreatening Newcomers in *Alien Nation* (1988), though you need to add it to water first, as brine is like acid to them. (Or pack a carton of sour milk to get them pissed up, then kick them to death.)



[5] BOOZE

Destroys: The tentacled extraterrestrials of *Grabbers* (2012)... All right, it doesn't actually destroy them, but it'll certainly weaken them and if you drink enough of it, they won't want to eat you.

[6] SLIM WHITMAN'S INDIAN LOVE CALL

Destroys: Martians. As in the big-brained, skull-faced, squawking ones from *Mars Attacks!* (1996). Country singer Whitman's yodelling makes their heads pop right open.

[7] CAFFEINE PILLS

Destroys: The aquatic alien creatures hiding in the staff room — and the staff — of Robert Rodriguez's *The Faculty* (1998). You grind it up to make a home-made stimulant, but its diuretic quality fatally dries out the water-dependent creatures.

[8] APPLE POWERBOOK 5300

Destroys: The landmark-disintegrating star-bastards in *Independence Day* (1996). You'll also need Goldblumesque computer know-how to use it to upload a virus to their mothership, and an alien shuttle to connect it up.

[9] FIREWORKS

Destroys: The fuzzy space invaders of *Attack The Block* (2011), who have a weakness to fire. Obviously, you'll have to ignore all those fireworks safety ads to make this work properly.

are, he estimates, three-quarters of the 2,000-odd effects shots still to sign off. It's enough to make him nostalgic for the good old days of practical effects. Right?

"No, I don't miss the models," insists Emmerich of the now ancient technology used to deliver the original's impressive sequences. "They had their charm, when you walked onto the soundstage and there were all these beautiful replicas. But on the other hand, when they were not working it was totally limiting. And you couldn't fix them. When I made the original *Independence Day* I felt totally hampered by what we could get on the screen. I had these images in my head and I couldn't do them." Then, while making his other calendar-based global disaster movie *2012*, the first film he shot with a digital camera, he realised he'd now be able to achieve what he'd previously considered impossible.

"I thought, 'Oh wow, now we could have a 3,000 mile-wide spaceship landing on Earth and make that convincing...'" And it's not just the saucers that are bigger. The scale of the destruction has exploded, too. As glimpsed in *Resurgence's* suitably bombastic trailers, those aliens aren't just blowing up landmarks this time. They're lifting them up into the air and dropping them on *other* landmarks.

Originally both Emmerich and Devlin, who had officially dissolved their business relationship in 2000 after

An iPhone 6S will
beat this, no problem.

APPETITE FOR DESTRUCTION

INDEPENDENCE DAY GAVE EMMERICH A TASTE FOR DEVASTATION. WE RANK HIS LAST 20 YEARS IN ORDER OF PLANETARY HARM

CIVILISATION ANNIHILATING



2012 (2009)

Proper worldwide super-destruction, thanks to megathrust earthquakes and megatsunamis. Most of humanity dies. The dog (a Japanese Chin) survives.



THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW (2004)

Climate change causes über-twisters in Hollywood, giant hailstones in Tokyo and a tidal wave in Manhattan. Then: an ice age in the northern hemisphere!



INDEPENDENCE DAY (1996)

NYC, DC, LA... If you can initialise your city, it turned into a fireball. The exploderising was widespread, but Emmerich kept his eye on the US here.



GODZILLA (1998)

Roland's iffy super-lizard carves a path of destruction from French Polynesia to New York, wrecking the Chrysler Building and the Brooklyn Bridge.



WHITE HOUSE DOWN (2013)

The ka-boomery is concentrated here: a bomb goes off on Capitol Hill, and there's extensive fire and structural damage to the White House.



10,000 BC (2008)

This prehistoric fantasy involves mass tribal (and mammoth) enslavement, but it's more about the *creation* of civilisation. Albeit a made-up one.



THE PATRIOT (2000)

The biggest casualties in this Mel Gibson-starring Revolutionary War flop are the 13 British colonies in North America, and historical accuracy.



ANONYMOUS (2011)

Earth gets off lightly, but William Shakespeare receives the stage-writing equivalent of a laser-blast to the White House. **DAN JOLIN**

MILDLY BOTHERSOME



Bill Pullman's President Whitmore: the years have not been kind.

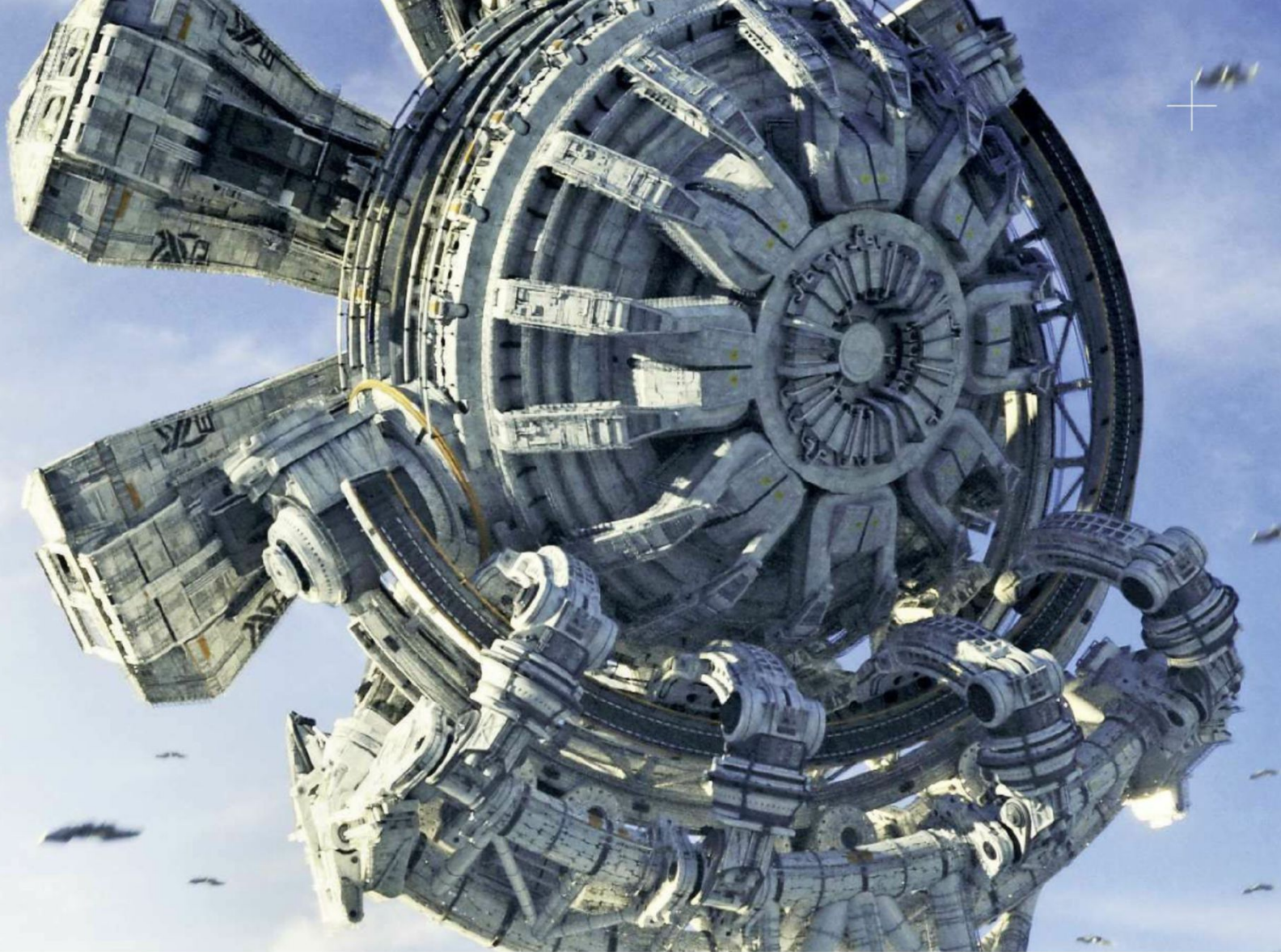


Director Roland Emmerich instructs Goldblum in E.T. extermination.

their Mel Gibson-starring War Of Independence movie *The Patriot* bombed at the box office ("The most amicable divorce in the movie business," smiles Devlin), were dead-set against any follow-up to the 1996 hit. But, rather counter-intuitively, they began to have second thoughts after 9/11.

Images of the twin towers falling had, as some observers noted at the time, borne a ghastly resemblance to a Hollywood disaster flick, and Devlin and Emmerich thought, for a while,

that they could deliver a sequel that addressed this. Eager for a follow-up, Fox wrote them "a big giant cheque", Devlin says. But in the end, it was not to be. "The first movie had had a lot of buildings blowing up and post-9/11 that seemed to be not so enjoyable anymore. So we tried to write a movie that went in the opposite direction. But after Roland and I had finished it we just read it to ourselves and thought, 'No, this really isn't a worthy sequel.'" Emmerich describes the script as



being “about peace — as *ridiculous* as that sounds. It was too different, not of the *Independence Day* world. It would totally not have worked. So we gave them the money back. I don’t think that has ever been done before,” he laughs.

But by 2014, after Emmerich had decided he now had both a story and the digital ability to tell it, another problem cropped up in the shape of the film’s original star, Will Smith. “Dean and I originally wrote the script as a two-parter and we sent it to Will at the worst possible moment,” says Emmerich. “By then he was shooting *After Earth* in Puerto Rico. And he called and said, ‘Guys, I cannot do three science-fiction movies in a row.’ (After *Earth* followed *Men In Black 3*.) That was a point where I thought, ‘Let’s not do this movie.’ Friends said I should carry on, that the ideas were really great, but I carried on in a half-hearted way.”

Enter stage left screenwriters Woods and Wright, fans of the original movie who had very clear ideas about how to retool it for the 21st century. The first half of Devlin and Emmerich’s screenplay they loved. But the second half they thought should totally change. Their notion, of a whole generation

Fair to say this isn’t a skirmish.

of young people, many orphans who lost their own parents in the first war, waiting for an inevitable return visit by the enemy while the worried elders try desperately to prepare them to fight Earth’s final conflict, revived Emmerich’s passion for the story. “Imagine, you’ve won the battle, but you were quite lucky. And now what you have to do is figure out how to defend your victory. It’s a simple idea but it is super complicated in the way it’s told.”

Emmerich also confesses he was, by this time, feeling a growing personal impulse to finally revisit the film — at the time the second-highest grossing in history — that gave him such a successful career in Hollywood. “Maybe it’s the fact that I’m turning 60 this year,” he ponders. “I have a little feeling of, ‘Oh gosh...’ about it. I have a lot of crew members who are in this business because of *Independence Day*. Twenty years ago my DP (*Markus Förderer*) saw it with his dad, and it was why he wanted to become a DP. Finally I just sort of said to myself, ‘Well, maybe before I retire I really should do this.’”

Reviving decades-old franchises is, as Hollywood knows all too well, a risky business. For every *Jurassic*

World there’s a *Terminator Genisys*, for every *Planet Of The Apes* there’s *A Nightmare On Elm Street*. But if anyone can make the intergalactic death-ray strike twice, it’s the team that deployed it in the first place.

“Roland and Dean were devoted to the idea of making something good and not betraying people’s excitement about it,” says Goldblum. “And Roland is made to do this. He’s devoted his life to it and now he’s masterful. He has a wild (to my eye), utterly unflagging appetite to do it.”

The world has changed in other ways since Emmerich first blew audiences away by blowing it up. “If Bernie calls, I’ll go,” says Brent Spiner of a possible future Presidential screening summons. “And if Hillary calls, I’ll go. But there’s no goddamned way I’m watching this movie with Donald Trump.” Some global catastrophes are, it turns out, too awful to ponder. Even for those who make their living from them. ■

INDEPENDENCE DAY: RESURGENCE IS OUT ON JUNE 24 AND WILL BE REVIEWED IN A FUTURE ISSUE. THE INDEPENDENCE DAY 20TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION IS OUT ON BLU-RAY AND DVD FROM MAY 30.



A COMPLETE RETROSPECTIVE
ON THE BIG SCREEN

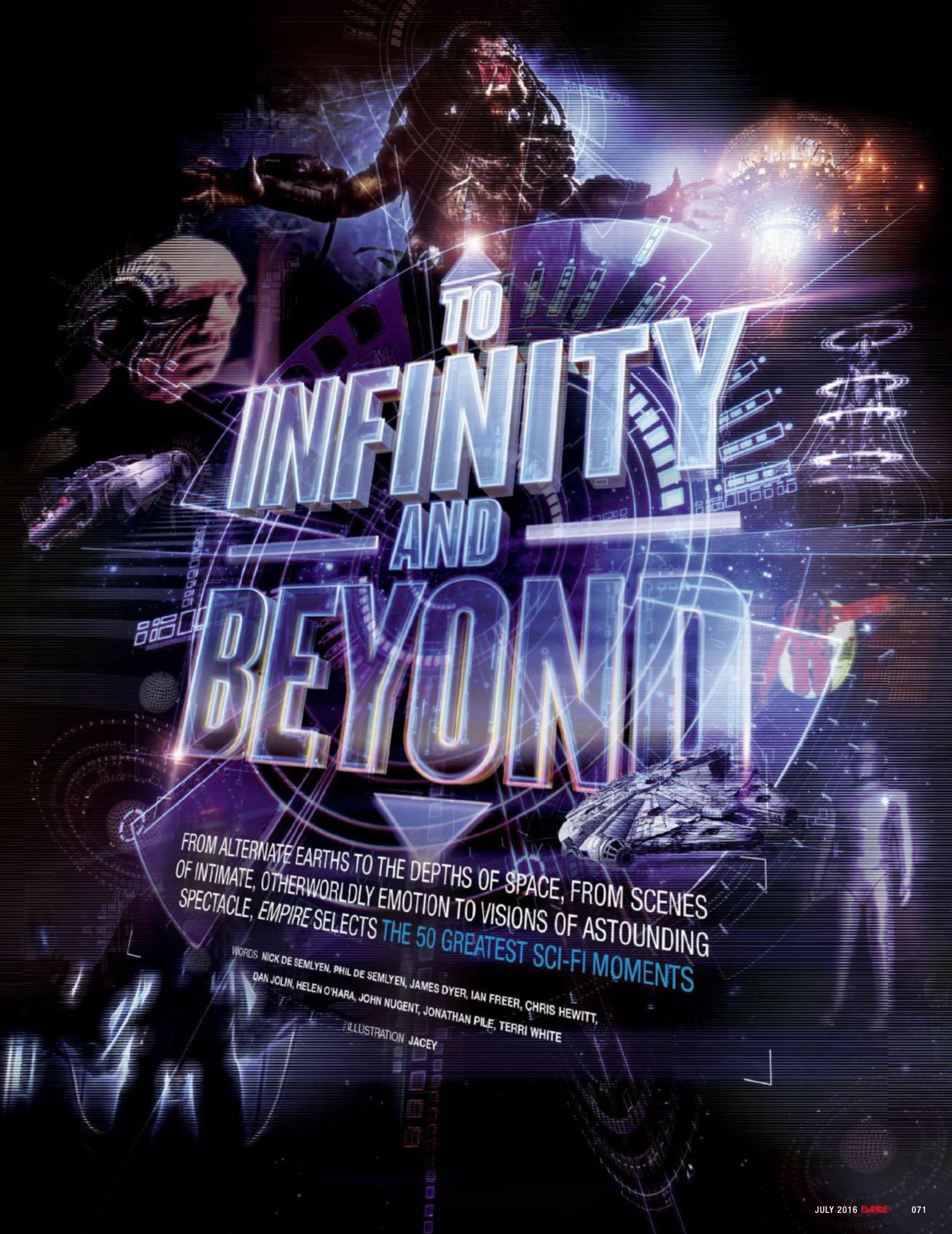
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ShortList



TO INFINITY AND BEYOND

FROM ALTERNATE EARTHS TO THE DEPTHS OF SPACE, FROM SCENES
OF INTIMATE, OTHERWORLDLY EMOTION TO VISIONS OF ASTOUNDING
SPECTACLE, *EMPIRE* SELECTS **THE 50 GREATEST SCI-FI MOMENTS**

WORDS NICK DE SEMLYEN, PHIL DE SEMLYEN, JAMES DYER, IAN FREER, CHRIS HEWITT,
DAN JOLIN, HELEN O'HARA, JOHN NUGENT, JONATHAN PILE, TERRI WHITE

ILLUSTRATION JACEY

**50 / DAVID'S
HORRIFIC HOMECOMING****FLIGHT OF THE NAVIGATOR (1986)**

For a movie pitched as an Amblin-style kids' adventure — complete with boy in early-CG spaceship — Disney's *Flight Of The Navigator* has a surprisingly harrowing scene. Unaware he's been missing for eight years thanks to time dilation, 12-year-old David (Joey Cramer) arrives home...

To find it redecorated and occupied by strangers. A nightmare scenario that makes the later cute-alien stuff a welcome tonic.

**49 / ENTER THE ENTERPRISE****STAR TREK: THE MOTION PICTURE (1979)**

Thanks to a malfunctioning transporter, Captain Kirk (William Shatner) is reunited with the USS Enterprise in a scene so gratuitous it feels indecent. From Scotty's shuttlecraft, Kirk gazes longingly as the ship hoves into view. What follows is four minutes and 26 seconds of pure starship porn, set to Jerry Goldsmith's *Enterprise Theme*. As we pan around, we see the Enterprise revealed section by section, teasing us with flashes of hull. Striptease, seduction and heartfelt reunion all in one.

**48 / THE DINNER-TABLE
MALFUNCTION****A. I. — ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (2001)**

Steven Spielberg's underrated robo-odyssey bursts with jaw-dropping visuals and ideas. But a low-key family dinner provides the film's most startling scene: in a fit of childish jealousy over his human brother, the robot boy David (Haley Joel Osment) wolfs down spoonfuls of spinach — triggering the robot equivalent of a stroke. That parental adage about always eating your greens doesn't apply here.

47 / GIVE THE BOY A HAND**FANTASTIC PLANET (1973)**

Full of indelible imagery, René Laloux's trippy cut-out animation imagines a world of blue aliens (Draags) who treat humans (Oms) like animals. Adopting an orphaned Om, Draag Tiwa (voiced by Jennifer Drake) treats him like a pet: the moment she first holds him in her hand is as tender as it is surreal. And this is some 30 years before Neytiri and Jake achieved inter-species connection in *Avatar*. Speaking of which...

**46 / JAKE TEST-DRIVES
HIS NEW BODY****AVATAR (2009)**

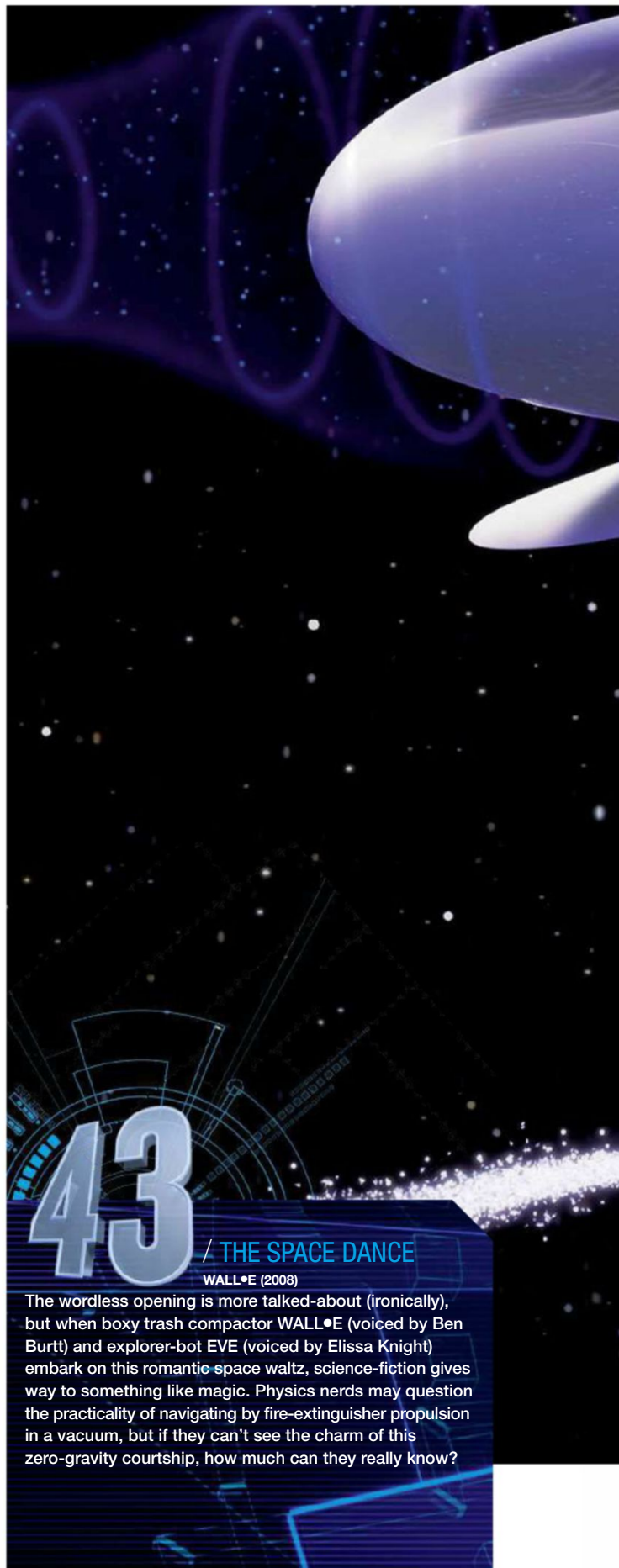
James Cameron's clash of civilisations hangs on the idea of humans inhabiting alien bodies, and he sells it wonderfully with Sam Worthington's Jake Sully unwisely progressing from blurred vision to sprinting around in about two minutes. The joy the paraplegic veteran takes from his working legs and sudden freedom sets up everything that follows, the mechanical, human world quickly fading against the colour and life of Pandora.

**45 / MARTHA MEETS
HER NEW HUSBAND****BLACK MIRROR, BE RIGHT BACK (2013)**

When Ash (Domhnall Gleeson) dies in a car accident, his grieving wife Martha (Hayley Atwell) turns to a futuristic service which artificially recreates people from their social media posts: *Facebook*-generated cloning, essentially, exactly the kind of sly satire that defines Charlie Brooker's *Twilight Zone*-ish anthology series. As android Ash emerges from his electrolyte rebirth, face as blank as a Stepford Wife, Martha has to grapple with a complex philosophical and emotional conundrum (as well as an extending robot penis).

**44 / ALIEN SEX FRIENDS****MONSTERS (2010)**

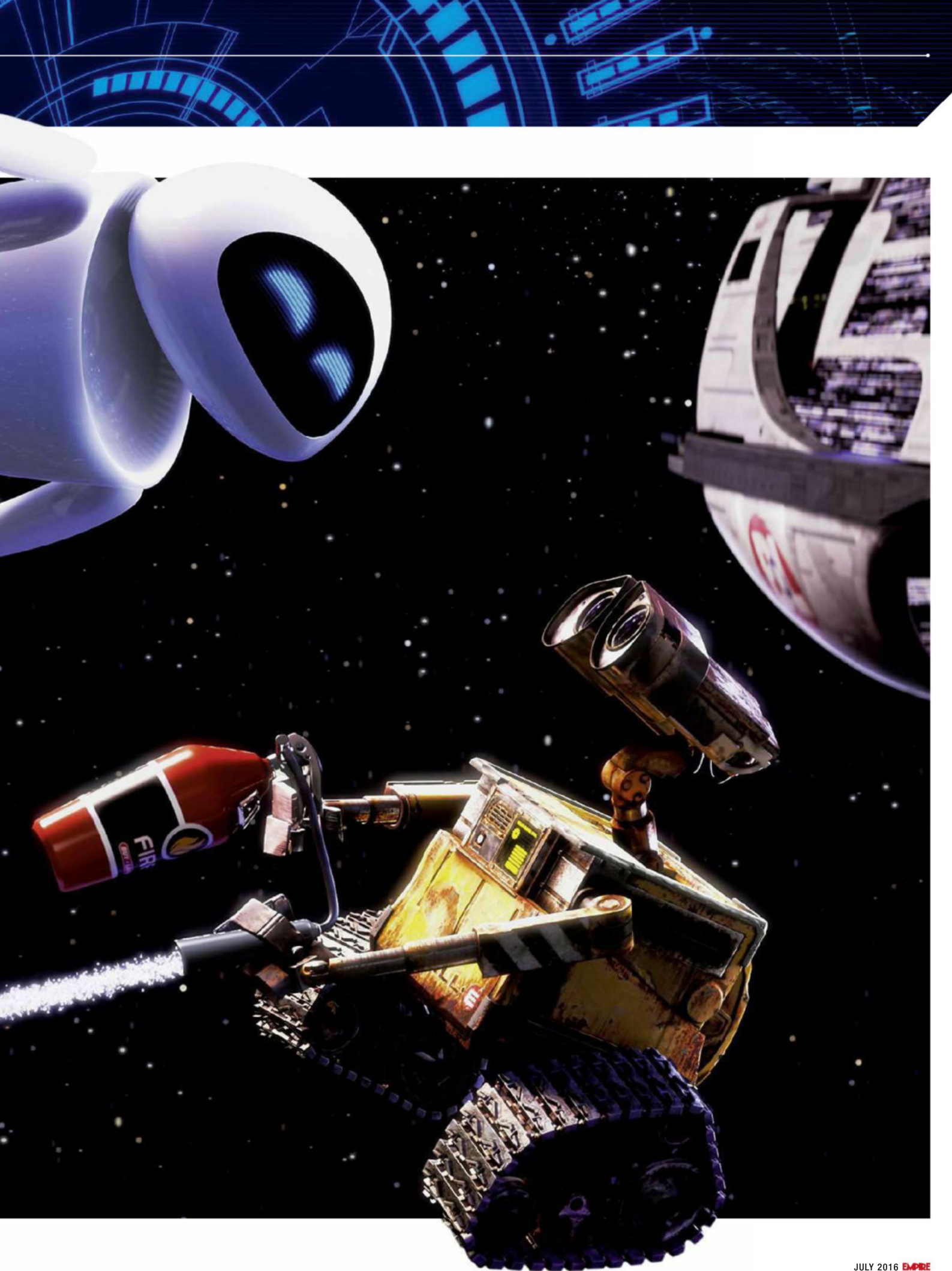
The sort of sex scene you won't find on Pornhub, the climax to Gareth Edwards' DIY-fi road trip comes when two towering aliens get together at an abandoned petrol station and bump extra-terrestrial uglies in a spectacular, tentacular display of light and sound. All Sam (Whitney Able) and Andrew (Scoot McNairy), the nominal leads, can do is look on in amazement.



43

/ THE SPACE DANCE**WALL•E (2008)**

The wordless opening is more talked-about (ironically), but when boxy trash compactor WALL•E (voiced by Ben Burtt) and explorer-bot EVE (voiced by Elissa Knight) embark on this romantic space waltz, science-fiction gives way to something like magic. Physics nerds may question the practicality of navigating by fire-extinguisher propulsion in a vacuum, but if they can't see the charm of this zero-gravity courtship, how much can they really know?



42 / THE EMPTY CITY

THE DAY THE EARTH CAUGHT FIRE (1961)

A man wanders around a deserted London, while the feeling of imminent apocalypse hangs heavy in the air. Years before Danny Boyle shut down streets for Cillian Murphy to traipse about in *28 Days Later*, Val Guest had Edward Judd do the same for the sepia-toned opening of this classic Brit B movie. Eerie, unforgettable and hugely influential.



41 / CAESAR'S FIRST WORD

RISE OF THE PLANET OF THE APES (2011)

Incarcerated in a crooked ape sanctuary and pushed over the edge by the owner's son Dodge (Tom Felton), super-intelligent chimp Caesar (Andy Serkis) squares up against his oppressor. Serkis, resonating through the astonishing performance-capture work, roars "No!" in a powerful act of defiance. It's punch-the-air stuff, but remember what we're ultimately celebrating is the demise of our species...

40 / "LISTEN TO ME! THEY'RE NOT HUMAN! EVERYONE! THEY'RE HERE ALREADY! YOU'RE NEXT!"

INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS (1956)

39 / THE DESTRUCTION OF VULCAN

STAR TREK (2009)

In a shocking break from *Trek* canon, J. J. Abrams states definitively that his *Star Trek* is prepared to go where none has gone before. Nero (Eric Bana) has drilled red matter into Vulcan's core, creating a black hole. As it expands, Spock's home world collapses, taking millions of people with it and making it devastatingly obvious this is a whole new universe.



38

/ LEELOO'S ESCAPE

THE FIFTH ELEMENT (1997)

Miraculously spun into being from a few surviving cells after a spaceship disaster, childlike warrior Leeloo is wrapped in "thermal bandages" that look like a bikini with pretensions (technically they're haute couture, daahling, courtesy of Jean-Paul Gaultier, who turned costume designer for the film). Threatened by her captors and pursued by police, she smashes through the unbreakable glass of her regeneration cell and dives through a wall. She emerges on a tiny ledge high on a skyscraper, far above the flying 23rd-century traffic and shaking at the sensory overload. But Milla Jovovich's eccentric, orange-dreadlocked figure is a supreme being, so she gathers herself and swan-dives into the void. It begins like a riff on *The Fugitive's* dam scene, but this feels grander and more intense. Eric Serra's score seems to pause for breath as Leeloo hangs angelically for a moment, before plunging into a maelstrom of blaring horns, flashing lights and hectic pursuit. It's the perfect introduction to Luc Besson's barmy, ultra-vibrant future. Think *Blade Runner* on a sunny day, or *Metropolis* by way of *Looney Tunes*.

37 / THE RETURN TO THE CITADEL

MAD MAX: FURY ROAD (2015)

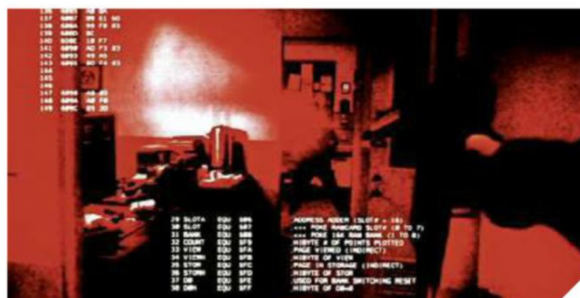
Just when you thought *Fury Road* had peaked, George Miller really maxes out the mad. As the thundering War Rig, carrying Max (Tom Hardy), Furiosa (Charlize Theron) and various wives, waifs and strays, heads back towards Immortan Joe's (Hugh Keays-Byrne) Citadel, they're attacked by a bunch of chainsaw-wielding maniacs who sway around on giant poles attached to dune buggies, like crazed, evil Cirque du Soleil acrobats. Lots of things explode, Max looks bewildered, and the Doof Warrior plays a bitchin' solo on a flame-throwing guitar. Okay, now it's peaked.



36 / THE DESTRUCTION OF THE OLYMPIC CARRIER

BATTLESTAR GALACTICA, 33 (2004)

After a gruelling series of attacks on the fleet in this first-season episode of Ronald D. Moore's celebrated and timely sci-fi reboot, Starbuck (Katee Sackhoff) and Apollo (Jamie Bamber) are ordered to open fire on a transport that was accidentally left behind and now might be carrying a tactical nuke... In addition to its 1,345 civilian passengers. While the faces of the terrified travellers were removed from the shots at the network's behest, the sheer weight of guilt etched on both pilots' faces is no less devastating.



35 / THE POLICE-STATION ASSAULT

THE TERMINATOR (1984)

Having been uttered in everything from *Twins* to *Jingle All The Way*, Schwarzenegger's hoary catchphrase has long since become a punchline. Its first utterance, however, as the T-800 glares down at the Central Division desk sergeant, is a bone-chilling threat delivered in three simple syllables. As legend has it, Schwarzenegger had insisted that "I will be back" would be more authentically robotic, but Cameron would not be moved. Neither could have guessed how iconic that moment, or that line, would become. Having been denied access to his quarry, the Terminator finds itself thwarted by a jobsworth gatekeeper and, uttering that ominous promise, the cyborg takes his leave. Fifteen seconds later he's back, ploughing a Chevy Nova through door, desk and sergeant alike before slaughtering the occupants of the entire police station. A chilling reminder for Linda Hamilton's Sarah Connor that, from this machine, nowhere is safe.

34 / SEYMOUR WAITS FOR FRY

FUTURAMA, JURASSIC BARK (1997)

High on the list of things you assume you'll never experience: weeping uncontrollably at an episode of *Futurama*. But as the strings swell on Connie Francis' *I Will Wait For You* over, a montage of Fry's dog sitting in the same spot for 12 years waiting for his master's return (a return that will never come), it's okay to show some emotion. We won't judge.



33 / WHAT AN EYEFUL

A TRIP TO THE MOON (1902)

Georges Méliès' landmark nine-minute film sends an astronomer's club in a bullet-shaped spacecraft to the moon. Fired out of a cannon, they smack the poor man in the moon squarely in the eye and an iconic image was born. If visual effects have become more sophisticated, they have rarely bettered the simple, imaginative idea behind this shot.

32 / THE PREDATOR'S LAST LAUGH

PREDATOR (1987)

"What the hell are you?" Wheezing and coughing up huge globs of lambent green blood, the downed alien glares at a mud-streaked Schwarzenegger, who's just spared it a final blow at the last minute. Flipping open its wrist computer, the fallen hunter triggers a sound that builds into a buzzing crescendo. As Schwarzenegger looks on, the creature begins to shudder in grim mimicry of Sonny Landham's belly laugh, howling its delight at the impending devastation. It's the ultimate "fuck you" from a formerly unstoppable foe.

31 / NADA DONS THE SUNGLASSES

THEY LIVE (1988)

One of John Carpenter's cultiest classics, this gonzo thriller-cum-satire sees a burly drifter ('Rowdy' Roddy Piper) wrestle his mate for a pair of sunglasses that let the wearer see aliens hidden in our midst. When he finally puts them on, the revelations are terrifically trippy: adverts that really say "CONSUME" and freaky-faced extraterrestrials that resemble Skeletor wearing a toupee.

30 / THE TRUTH IS IN THERE

THE X-FILES, PILOT (1993)

We could have picked any number of moments involving alien bounty hunters or toilet-trolls. But this quieter, *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*-riffing scene, in which the nefarious Cigarette Smoking Man (William B. Davis) stashes hard-won evidence in a ludicrously large Pentagon storeroom, stuffed with thousands of similar boxes, was the exciting first indication of what Mulder (David Duchovny) and Scully (Gillian Anderson) were up against.



29 / DANE SAYS IT WITH FEELING

GALAXY QUEST (1999)

All the way through *Galaxy Quest*, embittered actor Alexander Dane (Alan Rickman) says, "By Grabthar's Hammer, by the suns of Warvan, you shall be avenged" — the catchphrase of his TV character Dr. Lazarus — with various degrees of contempt. But when a Thermian dies in his arms, he delivers the speech and finally means it. Even more emotional now, for Rickman-related reasons, but it's always packed a punch as this daffy comedy finds true poignancy.



28 / "PLEASE PUT DOWN YOUR WEAPON. YOU HAVE 20 SECONDS TO COMPLY."

ROBOCOP (1987)



27 / SKYSCRAPER INVASION

BRAZIL (1985)

Bureaucratic drone Sam Lowry (Jonathan Pryce) may lack ambition, but by night he dreams of being a winged warrior, flying through the plump white clouds of a vast, azure sky in pursuit of an ethereal beauty (Kim Greist) — who, it turns out, also lives in his gloomy, Orwellian real world. Then, with a flourish of apocalyptic inventiveness, director Terry Gilliam suddenly violates this surreal idyll with slate-black, windowless skyscrapers. Realised through some astonishing, small-budget-defying model work (under the supervision of Richard Conway, who most recently worked on *Ex Machina*), these monolithic invaders punch their way through the rolling green fields below and slice high into Sam's sky, cutting him off from his dream-love. Not just a powerful image, but also a horrible reflection of the way Sam's waking life is unravelling, and a foreshadowing of where his dreams will lead him in his dystopian reality.



26 / JOURNEY INTO THE ZONE

STALKER (1979)

A sci-fi trek to rival 2001's *Star Gate* scene and the bit where Bill and Ted use that phone box, Andrei Tarkovsky's *Stalker* sends its trio of travellers (Aleksandr Kaidanovsky, Anatoli Solonitsyn and Nikolai Grinko) into the constantly changing Zone on, of all things, a motorised trolley. Long takes, unsettling sound design — the bleeps and squelches would satisfy the most hardened raver — and a switch from brown monochrome to a lush colour palate all combine to usher us hypnotically into one of cinema's eeriest landscapes.



23

/ THE FALCON FLIES AGAIN

STAR WARS: THE FORCE
AWAKENS (2015)

For all the fine work done by the new characters in the opening half hour of *The Force Awakens* to reintegrate us into the *Star Wars* universe, there's nothing that quite matches the heady blast of nostalgia which accompanies the on-screen return of the Millennium Falcon. And it comes as a complete surprise — the action scene leading up to its appearance is so engaging, it doesn't give you even a moment to realise something so monumental is about to happen. The ship itself has been left to rot in a desert junkyard, half-hidden beneath a weather-beaten cloth, and is dismissed as "garbage" — it's clearly seen better days (although that was also true as far back as *A New Hope*). But Rey (Daisy Ridley), Finn (John Boyega) and BB-8 running (or indeed rolling) towards it as a familiar fanfare plays is the cue for the hairs on the back of your neck to stand on end. Then, as she proves she's still got it where it counts during the aerial dogfight over (and inside) the Star Destroyer crashed on the surface of Jakku, it became joyously clear: *Star Wars* was back, and it was in safe hands.

25 / THE FLASH-FORWARD

LOST, THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS (2007)

For their Season 3 finale, the *Lost* writers weren't satisfied with a mere rug-pull. Instead they whipped away underlay and floorboards, too — not content until we were lying in a crumpled heap in the basement. After following a dishevelled, painkiller-addicted Jack (Matthew Fox) through what we thought were the episode's flashbacks, in the final scene Kate (Evangeline Lilly) shows up and it's revealed they were actually flash *forwards*, to after the pair got off the island, with Jack insisting, "We have to go back!" Minds suitably blown, the credits rolled. Now *that's* how you do a cliffhanger.

24 / A PHILOSOPHICAL DEFUSION

DARK STAR (1974)

John Carpenter's debut is the slacker's 2001: *A Space Odyssey*, a comedy set on a deteriorating scout-ship manned by a bickering crew on a decades-long mission to destroy unstable planets. When one of its intelligent bombs, Thermostellar Bomb #20, decides to blow itself up despite not having been launched, Lt. Doolittle (Brian Narelle) dons a spacesuit and has only four-and-a-half minutes to teach it the rudiments of phenomenology, and thereby make it question the data it has ordering it to explode. Possibly the tensest philosophical discussion in cinema.



22 / THE DOME FLOATS AWAY

SILENT RUNNING (1972)

Decades before *WALL•E* took a green-fingered approach to sci-fi, there was *Silent Running*. Its potent finale sees lonely gardener Lowell (Bruce Dern) sacrifice himself and his ship so his space greenhouse might survive. As the credits roll, the geodesic dome floats into darkness, with only a robot named Dewey tending to the last vestiges of plant life. It's a heartbreaking ode to Earth, set a billion miles away from it.



21 / LOCUTUS OF BORG

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION, THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS (1990)

Oft-cited as *The Next Generation*'s standout, this two-parter sees Captain Picard (Patrick Stewart) abducted by hive mind The Borg (a thinly veiled metaphor for Soviet communism). When his crew stage a rescue, they glimpse Picard in profile, but as he turns, the right side of his face is covered with cybernetic implants. But it gets worse... The crew flee, only to face their erstwhile captain on the Enterprise's viewscreen. "I am Locutus of Borg," he intones. "Resistance is futile." "Mr. Worf," responds Riker (Jonathan Frakes), after a pause. "Fire."

20 / HAN LENDS A HAND

STAR WARS (1977)

Such is the intensity of the Battle Of Yavin, especially as Luke (Mark Hamill) carries out his trench run — what with Darth Vader chasing him and Obi-Wan's disembodied voice urging him to "use the Force" — it's easy to forget Han Solo (Harrison Ford) needs to redeem himself. Even on the 20th viewing. But he does, and in style, sending Vader's TIE fighter spinning into space and leaving Luke clear to, well, blow that thing and go home.



19

/ MOTHERSHIP!

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND (1977)

Riffing on Disney's *Night On Bald Mountain* sequence from *Fantasia*, *Close Encounters* delivers one helluva light show as UFOs buzz around Devils Tower, Wyoming. But all that is just prelude to the breathtaking sight of the Mothership, rising above the landing strip, rotating on its axis before setting down to land. Steven Spielberg's initial conception for the ship was a monolithic black shape that blocked out the stars, then emitted a blinding white light from its underbelly. Legend has it he got the idea while slightly stoned, doing a handstand on the bonnet of his car and looking out over the urban sprawl of Los Angeles while upside down. The more likely inspiration is that while on location in India he was struck by an oil refinery lit up at night by thousands of little lights. The resulting model was six feet in diameter, weighed 40lbs and was an intricate structure of Plexiglas, steel and plywood lit up by quartz and neon bulbs. One of the movies' last great miniatures (step forward model maker Greg Jein), it inspires awe in ways a digital effect can never hope to replicate.

18 / A T-1000 WALKS INTO SOME BARS...

TERMINATOR 2: JUDGMENT DAY (1991)

ILM pioneered digital effects for James Cameron's *The Abyss* (1989) to achieve the climactic pseudopod that Cameron dubbed "the water weenie". But the shots the director wanted for his \$100 million *Terminator* sequel terrified the VFX team, not least the one in which shape-shifting assassin the T-1000 (Robert Patrick) gloops through a set of bars. The result remains stunning (a reaction shot of Earl Boen's Dr. Silberman sees his jaw drop), enhanced by a sound effect that was a can of dog food being emptied. Look online for a GIF of a Pomeranian recreating the scene.



17 / THE DOCTOR'S EXPENSIVE GOODBYE

DOCTOR WHO, DOOMSDAY (2006)

There have been many assistants and several Doctors, but few have the magic of the tenth (David Tennant) and his Rose (Billie Piper). Their relationship arc peaked in *Doomsday* — the finale of Season 2. The episode featured a first: Daleks and Cybermen together on screen, fighting an epic battle (basically a proto *Batman v Superman*). There's only one man to save the world, but the cost is heavy as Rose is trapped in a parallel universe. Cue ugly tears and a heart-shredding farewell via teleportation — "I'm burning up a sun just to say goodbye."



16 / THE T-REX ATTACKS

JURASSIC PARK (1993)

On set, the T-Rex was not exactly scary. The giant animatronic puppet kept breaking down from the rain machines and shedding teeth from gnawing on Ford Explorers. Yet as with *Jaws*, and its malfunctioning creature, Steven Spielberg and crew succeeded in turning an oversized hydraulic prop into a primal force of nature.

The build-up is masterfully prolonged: there's the mewling goat, thumping footsteps, a quivering glass of water. Then a giant, reptilian claw tests the shut-down electric fence and we're off to the races. As the humans peer at the lumbering beast through car windows, like visitors to Woburn Safari Park on a really bad day, Spielberg's genius is in largely keeping us trapped in the vehicles with them, cutting wide to showcase ILM's incredibly convincing CG Rex. It's a thunderously intense set-piece, made more so by the fact that the film's score drops out for its entirety. Maybe John Williams was hiding in a toilet.



15 / GORT'S ENTRANCE

THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL (1951)

Never mind that at one point you see the crease in the foam-rubber suit (worn by 7'7" actor Lock Martin) that's supposed to be a metal body. *This* is how to pull off an entrance. After Klaatu (Michael Rennie) arrives on Earth and is shot by a panicky soldier, Gort appears, imperious and implacable, at the top of the spaceship ramp. Popping back his visor to reveal a glowing eye that would inspire countless sci-fi bad 'uns (hello, Cylons!), he destroys the army's weapons with precision blasts before going back on duty as the original guardian of the galaxy. The all-CG Gort in the 2008 remake didn't come close.

14 / "ROADS? WHERE WE'RE GOING, WE DON'T NEED ROADS."

BACK TO THE FUTURE (1985)



13 / THE SPINNING CORRIDOR FIGHT

INCEPTION (2010)

Cinematographer Wally Pfister recalls scratching his head when pondering the epic corridor fight. How do you film a fight scene in a dreamscape where gravity's gone crazy? The answer involved 500 crew-members, rotating sets, wire-work and a vast airship hangar. The result is sheer cinematic disbelief: Joseph Gordon-Levitt and his foes' manoeuvres are like a punch-up inside a Rubik's Cube.



12 / THE DESTRUCTION BEGINS

INDEPENDENCE DAY (1996)

The aliens positioned 108 City Destroyers over the Earth. We see three. All of them in the United States (funny that). But Roland Emmerich made that trio count, cranking up the tension with a countdown clock and, as it hit zero, Jeff Goldblum's realisation that, "Time's up." Then the blue lasers let rip, destroying the Empire State Building, the White House and... that one in LA (actually the U.S. Bank Tower). Much imitated since, but never bettered. After all, when you've destroyed the White House, where else is there to go? Perhaps we'll find out on June 24, when Emmerich's aliens return to create mayhem all over again.



11 / THE BLOOD TEST

THE THING (1982)

At the peak of the paranoia that runs through John Carpenter's masterpiece like the blackest seam of coal, Kurt Russell's MacReady hits upon an ingenious scheme: the only way to tell who's human, and who's a shapeshifting Thing, is by drawing out their blood and heating up the plasma. We *know* someone will out themselves, but we don't know who, when or how: Hitchcock himself couldn't have orchestrated tension this precisely. It has everything: suspense, action, heroism, gore, and an amazing punchline with Donald Moffat's Garry raging at his fellow survivors. Incredibly, in a film featuring FX boffin Rob Bottin's transmogrifying dogs, a chest cavity filled with fangs, and a disembodied head that turns into a spider, the scene also has the film's simplest effect: the hand Russell uses to hold the petri dish is a fake. It's so good Robert Rodriguez borrowed the scene wholesale for *The Faculty*. And praise doesn't come any higher than that.



10 / VADER'S BIG REVELATION

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK (1980)

The impact of this twist cannot be understated. No-one saw it coming. Not even George Lucas, initially, who didn't have the family connection in the first draft of the script. Often misquoted (it's actually, "No. I am your father"), it was the moment *Star Wars* graduated from fun space fantasy to complex saga of Shakespearean levels (well, something vaguely similar happens in *Cymbeline*). In fact, it dictated the path the subsequent films took (for good or ill), meaning that *Return Of The Jedi* had to have a similar familial twist (now, separated twins are very Shakespearean), that three prequel films dealt with Anakin's fall, and that *The Force Awakens'* antagonist was related to the good guys. Just imagine if Lucas had stuck with his original idea — that Anakin's ghost would appear to Luke on Dagobah. The *Star Wars* franchise would be completely different. And, let's be honest, nowhere near as world-conquering.



09 / THE DEATH OF SPOCK

STAR TREK II: THE WRATH OF KHAN (1982)

The most tear-jerking scene in sci-fi arose from necessity: Leonard Nimoy agreed to return as Spock only if he died. But the resulting tragedy was the keystone to *Star Trek*'s best film, and an emotional wallop that reinvigorated the franchise. It certainly didn't hurt that it followed a knuckle-bitingly tense battle between the Enterprise and the revenge-fixated Khan (Ricardo Montalbán), and what made it hurt *more* was the fact it hit during what should have been a moment of triumph. On racing to Engineering, Kirk (William Shatner) finds his friend of 30 years dying of radiation poisoning after sacrificing himself to save them all. Shatner doesn't often get credit for his acting, but his performance as the pair slump on opposite sides of the safety glass is devastating. While Nimoy's, "I have been — and always shall be — your friend," is more famous, it's Kirk's choked, "No," that pins the scene.



08 / A FORCE AWAKENS

THE MATRIX (1999)

Taking the red pill may have been the correct choice, but for Keanu Reeves' Neo it proves a painful dose of reality. And for the audience it's a deftly executed early plot twist, changing everything (and hitting a multiplex crowd with a heady dose of Baudrillardian philosophy along the way). So the world that looks and feels like ours is merely a virtual construct. And the world that is actually real is a sunless, robo-apocalyptic nightmare where humanity is little more than an exploitable energy source. It's a classic sci-fi idea — a hero realizing that the world he lives in is a lie — but the Wachowskis reinvigorated it via a plethora of influences: Lewis Carroll (the looking glass Neo dips his finger into after taking the pill), David Cronenberg (the body-horror of the cables connected to him) and H. R. Giger (the insect-like machine). To prep, Reeves lost 15lbs and shaved his body for an emaciated just-born look. Rebirth has rarely been so exciting or savagely beautiful.



07 / "GET AWAY FROM HER, YOU BITCH!"

ALIENS (1986)



06 / MARIA'S TRANSFORMATION

METROPOLIS (1927)

It may be the second-oldest entry on the list, but the centerpiece of Fritz Lang's sci-fi masterpiece is still a tour de force of visual effects nearly 90 years on. Amid his laboratory's cranking levers and bubbling flasks, mad scientist Rotwang (Rudolf Klein-Rogge) brings Robot Maria (Brigitte Helm) to life in a storm of electricity. In the process he unleashes 1927's equivalent of a T-1000 on the unsuspecting people of Metropolis and creates a movie moment so iconic, it's been homaged in everything from the video for Queen's *Radio Ga Ga* to the original design of C-3PO. Lang made full use of his cinematic toy box, employing multiple exposures, matte cutouts, neon lights and a very long-suffering actress to make it work. German film star Helm, confined to the robot suit for days at a time, politely enquired of her director why she needed to be in the suit when no-one could even see her. "I have to feel that you are inside the robot," was his brusque reply. Arnie can count himself lucky. He only had to get naked in *Terminator*.

05

/ TAYLOR DISCOVERS
A HOME TRUTH

PLANET OF THE APES (1968)

The fifth-greatest sci-fi moment is also cinema's greatest twist ending. Having escaped his oppressors on this crazy, ape-run planet, misanthropic astronaut Taylor (Charlton Heston) has set off on a beach ride of discovery, which concludes with a revelation that resets the context of everything that's gone before.

Upon the discovery of a half-buried Statue Of Liberty, Taylor's struck by the true reality of his situation: he's not on some distant world, but back on a terra firma his descendants managed to destroy. Heston's anguished, sand-punching breakdown says it all: "We finally *really* did it! You maniacs! You blew it up! Ah, damn you! God damn you all to hell!" Even a cynic like Taylor can't handle *this* truth.

Time, and parody (none better than *The Simpsons'* *Stop The Planet Of The Apes, I Want To Get Off!*), have done little to lessen this moment's impact, but imagine how it must have felt watching it in America in 1968, in the midst of the Cold War, with Vietnam raging and civil unrest rife, as the screen faded to black, and the credits rolled to only the sound of crashing waves.





04 / KANE'S ACID INDIGESTION

ALIEN (1979)

"Kane seemed fine. We were all having dinner, and, um... it must have laid something inside his throat, some sort of embryo. He started... um, he..." Ripley's choked recollection of *Alien*'s infamous chestbuster scene hardly does justice to one of cinema's most shocking sequences. But if audiences were left gibbering wrecks as the miniature xenomorph tore free of John Hurt's gaping chest wound, it's nothing compared to what the cast went through while shooting it. Though they had seen the puppet and knew it would burst out of Hurt, the others were not present for the set-up and, as they held him down while he convulsed, were completely unaware his body was now hidden beneath the table, or exactly how bloody it was going to get. So as the prosthetic torso explodes in a rain of blood and offal (sourced from a local abattoir), the cast's horrified revulsion is entirely authentic.



03 / "ALL THOSE MOMENTS WILL BE LOST IN TIME... LIKE TEARS IN RAIN... TIME TO DIE."

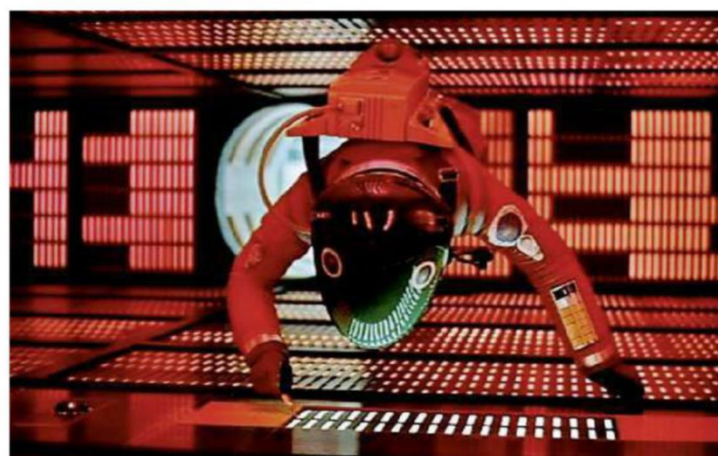
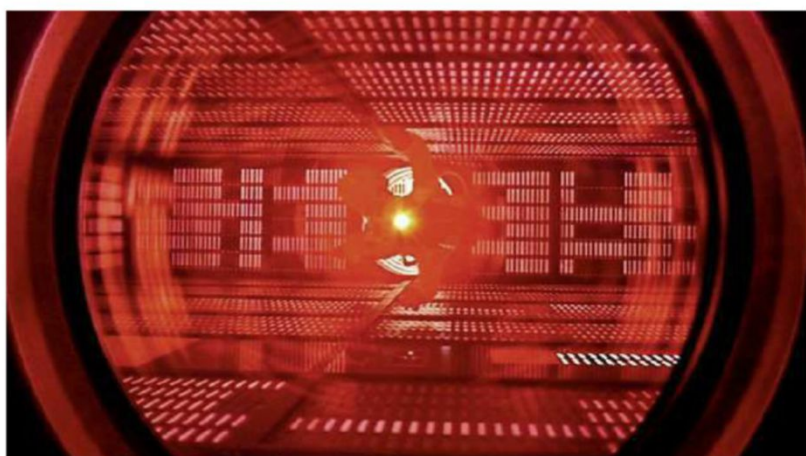
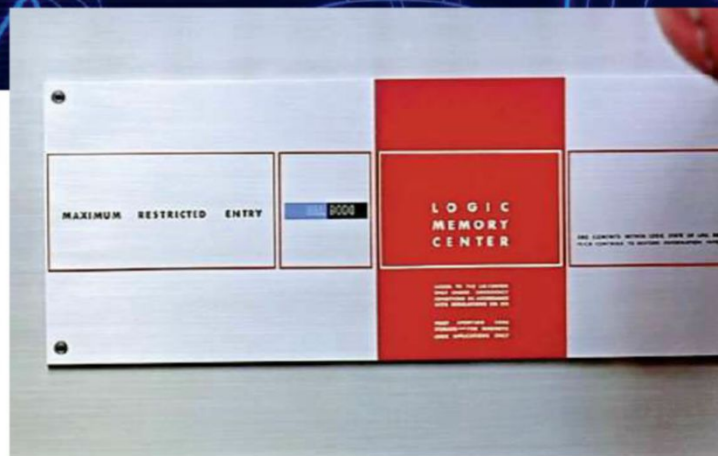
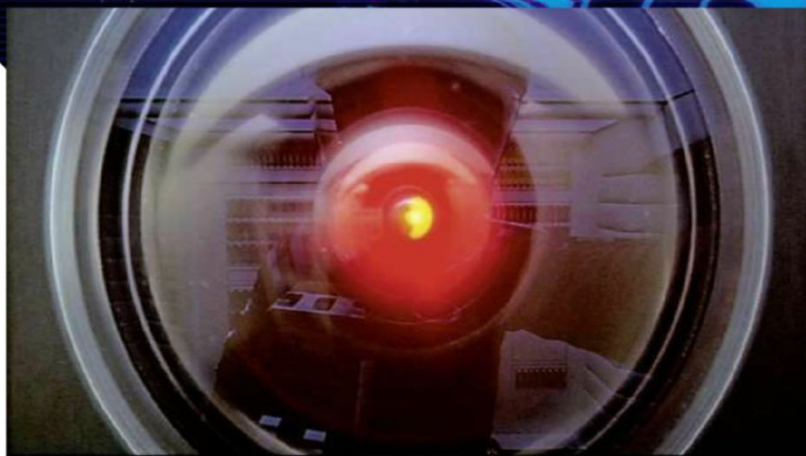
BLADE RUNNER (1982)

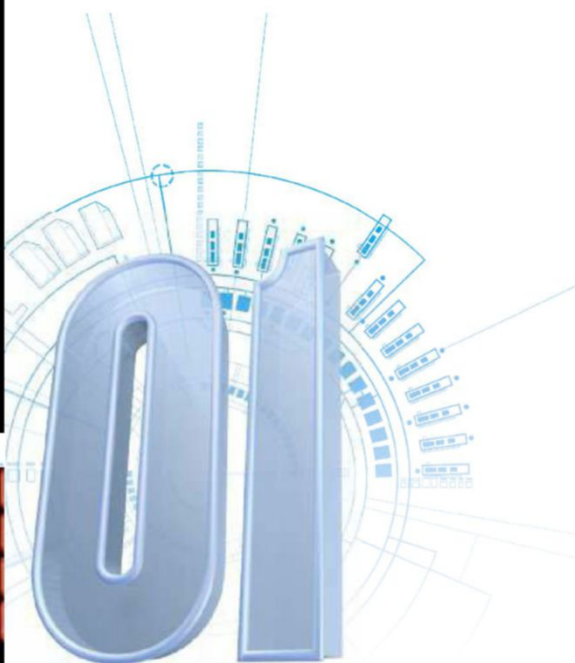


02 / BMX BANDITS

E.T. THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL (1982)

If the first over-the-moon flying bike ride in Steven Spielberg's masterpiece is pure enchantment, the second, at the end of the film, is complete and utter exhilaration. Elliott (Henry Thomas) and his buddies are on BMX bikes, furiously peddling E.T. to meet the aliens' spaceship. Chased by the Feds on foot, they are confronted by a road block of police cars and barriers cutting off their escape. All looks lost — Spielberg cuts twice, moving closer each time to Thomas' face to heighten the sense of impending doom — until E.T. magically lifts the entire group up, bikes included, off the ground and into a blazing orange sunset. The threat was diminished in the 2002 20th anniversary reissue when Spielberg digitally transformed the guns of the government agents into walkie-talkies, but either way, the (literally) uplifting ending is the stuff cinematic dreams are made of.





/ HAL SHUTS DOWN

2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY (1968)

There have been many other scary movie supercomputers: in 1965, just three years before Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, Jean-Luc Godard's *Alphaville* saw the titular city ruled by a data-bastard called Alpha 60. But none have ever been able to upgrade to the heights of the psychotic HAL 9000. There's his eerie lone red peeper, staring out like a robotic version of the Eye of Sauron. There's his mellow but menacing voice, provided by Canadian actor Douglas Rain. And then there's his unforgettable demise, as astronaut David Bowman (Keir Dullea) races to shut him down after he's pressed 'Power Off' on his human shipmate. It could have played out as an action scene, with HAL issuing dark threats and hurling obstacles. Instead, there's a strange poignancy as he suffers the computer equivalent of a mental breakdown. "I'm afraid, Dave... Dave, my mind is going... I can feel it... I can feel it... My mind is going," he monotones, pitifully, voice slowing like a pitched-down 12-inch. Then he sings a song: *Daisy Bell*, the 19th-century children's rhyme IBM selected for one of its computers to croon as a demonstration in 1961. Set to a background of hissing oxygen, it's a raw, intimate and surprisingly emotional moment. Not bad for a scene involving a box talking to a man in a helmet. It's easy to imagine that when the machines finally take over Earth for real, this will be their go-to weepie.

DRIVEN BY DEMONS

AFTER *DRIVE*, DIRECTOR **NICOLAS WINDING REFN** COULD HAVE MOVED ON TO BLOCKBUSTERS. INSTEAD, HE DIVED OFF DOWN HIS OWN DARK PATH, ONE THAT'S BROUGHT HIM TO HIS CRAZIEST FILM YET: *THE NEON DEMON*

WORDS DAMON WISE







FOUR YEARS AGO, NICOLAS Winding Refn had the movie world at his feet. The then-41 year-old Dane hit big with his pulsating LA-set neon-noir *Drive*, and the offers came rushing in: a remake of *Logan's Run*, a big-screen *Wonder Woman*, a mini-series based on *Barbarella*. He met with Harrison Ford about a possible spy thriller, and was hired to direct Sony Pictures' *The Equalizer*, starring Denzel Washington.

Yes, the movie world was at his feet. And Nicolas Winding Refn stepped right over it. He and Ford didn't see eye-to-eye over the fate of the thriller's main character (who, says Refn, Ford didn't want to kill off) and went their separate ways. Three months before it was set to shoot, he quit *The Equalizer*. And his next movie, 2013's Bangkok-set *Only God Forgives*, turned out to be a meditative, ultraviolent study of purgatory variously described as "spellbinding, visionary, ambitious and deeply affecting" and "plotless, creepy, meat-headed and boring". In short, it couldn't have been less 'Hollywood'.

After its premiere at the Cannes Film Festival, Refn sat on a yacht with Cliff Martinez, his go-to composer. "We were talking about the reception," the director recalls, "and I was still struggling to process it. People just couldn't stop talking about it: there were supporters and there were haters. And Cliff turned to me and said, 'Wow — you're the Sex Pistols of cinema.'" He laughs. "I remember going, 'Fuck, yeah!' And it felt great. Because there is a perverse pleasure in creating so much mayhem of opinions. And I'm resilient, y'know? I'm golden."

FOR MANY FILMMAKERS,

refusing to play the game can have dire consequences. It has, for example, finished the careers of Tony Kaye, Michael Cimino and even the late Michael Powell. Refn does admit to



Nicolas Winding Refn.

feeling the pressure. "There comes a point where they stop taking you seriously as a candidate," he reflects. "That happened to me, especially after *Only God Forgives* (which scraped a mere \$10 million worldwide). But also because I was turning things down."

When we meet, it's been nearly a year since Refn received his bloody nose for *Only God Forgives*, but no scars, visible or mental, are apparent; Refn has moved on. "You have to go through a little bit of a transformation," he shrugs. "I went into Cannes expecting to win the Palme d'Or." He chuckles. "Like, 'What more is there to talk about? I'm from the future. Beam me up afterwards!' But of course it didn't turn out like that. In a way, it didn't really matter, because I was on a larger path."

That path has brought him back to Hollywood, although not, stresses the director, to make a Hollywood movie.

Those projects he turned down, he turned down for *The Neon Demon*, a psychedelic shocker set in the fashion world and inspired by '70s splatter, '80s slashers and... *The Wizard Of Oz*. *Empire* finds Refn on set at The Paramour Mansion in Silver Lake, a supposedly haunted house built in 1923 as an exclusive, 22-room private estate and later used as a convent and a girls' school. It's a luxurious, melancholy and somewhat sinister place, which is why he chose it as a location for his study of "beauty and insanity" that stars Elle Fanning as an aspiring 16 year-old model. "I wanted to make a horror film without horror," he explains. "I wanted to make it visceral and fun, melodramatic and campy — all those different things entangled."

Another gorgeous but languorous picture, which features scenes of lesbian necrophilia, cannibalism and self-



immolation, it's safe to say *The Neon Demon* isn't exactly going to re-warm him to studio heads. Though life for *The Neon Demon* might be easier now everyone knows what to expect — or what not to expect. Which in the case of *Only God Forgives* was *Drive 2*.

"I didn't want to prohibit myself, and I was also, in a way, testing my own resilience," he reasons. "I didn't want to make *Drive 2*, because that would have been the easiest thing to do, for all the wrong reasons." Refn draws comparisons with Lou Reed, who released the cacophonous *Metal Machine Music* — 64 minutes and 11 seconds of feedback — at the height of his mainstream success. "But really," he adds, "it was also about not wanting to be controlled."

Failure is all-too-often the cost of freedom. And it's something Refn has tasted before. In 2003, high on the

From top to bottom:
Elle Fanning as
ambitious model
Jesse in *The Neon
Demon*; Ryan Gosling
as getaway expert
Driver in *Drive*; Tom
Hardy brutally breaks
through playing the
title role in *Bronson*.

international art-house success of his debut, *Pusher* (1996), and its follow-up, *Bleeder* (1999), Refn made his first English-language movie, *Fear X* (2003), starring John Turturro. He had been eyeing the States for a while, not as a calculated career move but because he'd lived in Manhattan during his teenage years ("I may have a Danish passport," he says earnestly, "but I'm a New Yorker by heart"). It was supposed to shoot in Utah, but Refn couldn't afford that — a bad omen for a film that would bankrupt him.

"My ego was out of control and I felt I could walk on water. Which I couldn't," he says. Although well reviewed, *Fear X* tanked at the box office, and Refn still can't bear to look at it. "Even the title is bad," he says. "But it didn't kill me, professionally. It just kind of bombed me back to the beginning."

Finding himself deep in debt, owing his bank a million dollars, Refn went to London to direct two episodes of *Miss Marple* for ITV. Yes, that's right. *Miss Marple*. For ITV. "I felt like a hasbeen," he admits. "A used-to-be. A failure. A casualty of the arts. But it was a time when I needed to step away from my own ego and just be a director for hire — not really care and just, purely craft-wise, direct. It was important for me, at that time, to go through that. I needed to be slapped around, because as I'd made more and more, it had become more about my own ego and vanity and how I wanted to be perceived by others as The Greatest Filmmaker Of All Time. But that didn't happen. And rightfully so."

YOU CAN UNDERSTAND WHY

Refn is now reluctant to return to work as a director-for-hire. But his *Marple* experience isn't the real reason for his avoidance of the mainstream and for *The Neon Demon* being his latest movie rather than, say, *Wonder Woman*.

In 2008 he entered what he calls "phase two" of his career with *Bronson*. Starring Tom Hardy, it's a surreal, heavily stylized biopic of Michael Peterson, the infamous British criminal who changed his name to Charles Bronson and reinvented himself as Britain's most violent prisoner during the '70s and '80s. It was also the first time Refn made a film for completely selfish reasons, based purely on what he himself wanted to see.

"Before that," he says, "I'd always been more preoccupied with making great cinema based on other people's

opinions. Other people accepting me, or acknowledging what I did. The neediness of wanting to be worshipped. And it wasn't very healthy." Pre-*Bronson*, he'd been more preoccupied with the end result, because that end result would lead to reviews and critical acclaim — and a big boost to his ego. "Which, I've learned the hard way, is the ultimate killer," he says. "It destroys more than it creates. But now it's more about the process for me. It's important I enjoy the process."


Today offers a good example of the process in question, one by which Refn allows himself complete creative liberty. After conferring with Fanning and her co-star Jena Malone, Refn has decided that a certain character destined to die will not be expiring after all. "It's a bit like being an infant playing with paint," he grins. "You're not going to tell me what to fuckin' do with the paint or how to make the paint. You can sit next to me and do it with me, but if I want to smash something up in the middle of it, I'll fuckin' well do so. I'm just trying to explain that pleasure in creativity is that, essentially. Because creativity is very much exhibitionism."

This artistic awakening is what took him away from *The Equalizer*, his first major Hollywood job after a *Jekyll & Hyde* remake, with Keanu Reeves, fell through back in 2009. "I liked the idea of *The Equalizer*, and it was gonna make a lot of money," he recalls. He also admits to being seduced by the idea of getting big Hollywood bucks to play with. "Because it was very seductive. But I thought, 'If I do this, I'm going to go against everything I've fought for all my life. And on top of that, I'm going to make a film where I have to compromise on every single thing, every day.' It just wasn't worth it. So I pulled out."

He went back to what he does best: pleasing himself. With one caveat: "In the end, what's most important is that my financiers make money," he says, "because that's what will allow me to make the next movie." That aside, he doesn't care what anybody else thinks. "I tell myself, 'If this is going to be the last movie I ever make, I'm gonna go out with a bang.' That at least forces you to make it with the arrogance of just doing what you want to do, and that's where the real pleasure lies in creativity. Compromising is not interesting for me. And I don't do it very well." ■

THE NEON DEMON IS OUT ON JULY 8 AND WILL BE REVIEWED IN THE NEXT ISSUE.





Scaling New Heights

Think an adaptation of Roald Dahl's *The BFG* was an easy fit for Steven Spielberg? Think again. He describes it as “truly my first fairy tale” and his biggest technical challenge since *Jurassic Park*

WORDS IAN FREER



IG-HEARTED, PACKED with visual effects, a family blockbuster... In theory, *The BFG* should place Steven Spielberg right slap bang in his comfort zone. And when *Empire* meets the director in New York, he does prove to be in a very relaxed, confident mood. He shows us videos of *The BFG*'s recording session on his iPhone, looks forward to *Indiana Jones V* ("We have a MacGuffin, that's all I can say"), and muses on his inability to make comedies; "I developed *Meet The Parents* for myself to direct," he says,

"but I realised, 'If I direct this I'm going to screw it up.'" Yet his affable demeanour belies just how tough the past three years have been for him. Making *The BFG* has turned out to be a journey full of last-gasp saves, seemingly insurmountable technical

peaks and heartbreaking loss. In short, it has been one of the greatest challenges of Spielberg's career.

The director's personal connection to the story started when he read Dahl's 1982 novel out loud to his first son Max (who grew up to direct *Jaws 19*). A spin-off from Danny, *The Champion Of The World* (it's a bedtime story Danny's father tells him), *The BFG* follows Sophie, an orphan who spots a Big Friendly Giant blowing dreams into children's bedrooms and is whisked off on an adventure involving human-eating giants and the Queen of England. But *The BFG* was just the tip of Spielberg's love for the author.

"I knew everything he had done," says Spielberg. "He just had his own voice unlike anyone else who had written books for the whole family. He went to those slippery slopes of scaring us and then in the same breath made us smile."

Over the years, Spielberg has kept tabs on the previous adaptations of Dahl's work — "I liked the Gene Wilder version of *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory*, but I preferred Tim Burton's.

I really admired what Stephen Daldry did on stage with *Matilda*" — and would seem a perfect fit for Dahl's sensibility: alive to the world of childish imagination and wonder, but able to flip light and dark on a dime. The heightened world of the BFG's homeland, Giant Country, feels akin to the Neverland of *Hook*, while the platonic love story of *E. T.* shares DNA with the unlikely friendship between a young "human bean" and a 24-foot giant — especially as *The BFG* and *E. T.* were both written for screen by Melissa Mathison. But Spielberg is careful not to draw similarities or dictate interpretations.

"You'll have to judge for yourself," he says. "*Hook* wasn't a fantasy to me. It had its feet more in reality, for me anyway. I consider *E.T.* a contemporary eventuality story. But there is a rhyming Melissa has had in all of her writings, from *The Black Stallion* to *E. T.* to *The BFG*. It might have been one of the things that attracted me to go back to the world of make-believe at my age. This, to me, is truly my first fairy tale."

It would not, though, have a happy ending. Tragically, on November 4, 2015,



Clockwise from main: Mark Rylance as E. T. Mk. 2, *The BFG*, with newcomer Ruby Barnhill as his small pal, Sophie; Hanging out can be awkward; Spielberg's directing is awesome, his drawing, not so good...

after the shoot wrapped, Mathison passed away from neuroendocrine cancer. Spielberg had suddenly lost one of his most fruitful collaborators and valued friends.

They'd first met while shooting *Raiders Of The Lost Ark* in the Tunisian desert, where she was accompanying friend Harrison Ford (the pair were later married). Spielberg had loved her *Black Stallion* screenplay and was trying to talk her into writing his next film, *E. T.* "She turned me down several times in Tunisia," he recalls. "She was not very happy with herself as a writer

at that time. It took Harrison Ford to convince her." After four months brainstorming, Mathison wrote the screenplay in just eight weeks. To this day, Spielberg has never made so few revisions to a script.

When Spielberg came on board *The BFG*, Mathison had already completed three drafts. "We took Melissa's script and together added more plot to it," says Spielberg. Mathison was on set every day, giving the director flashcards with that day's scenes and dialogue, a process the pair began when they worked together on *E. T.* For fans of the book, Mathison retained the Big Friendly Giant's mangled-up vocabulary (Charles Dickens = Dahl's chickens) that Spielberg predicts will send foreign-language translators into meltdown. But, more importantly, she transcribed the delicate dynamic of the central relationship.

"I hadn't read the book, so Melissa's screenplay was my first encounter with that story," says Mark Rylance, who plays the titular tall guy. "It was wonderful. I guess what Sophie gets from the BFG is a grandfather figure, but what he gets from Sophie is hope. He doesn't have any hope things can change, as old people don't. She's an amazing saviour in his life."

Spielberg was completely unaware of Mathison's illness during the shoot, and says he's still processing the loss of his friend. "I don't miss Melissa yet because I haven't had a chance to mourn her, because she is still with me. I'm not saying that in a supernatural way, because Melissa is alive in every single frame of *The BFG*. She has been with me all through this process and she is as tangible as if she were sitting next to me. What I'm not looking forward to is when I finish with *The BFG* and I have to face the fact that Melissa is no longer with me."



OVER A VALUED creative partner, Mathison had been present at Spielberg's dry run for *The BFG* in 2014, when he shot a 90-minute version in his garage at his Long Island home, with a production assistant playing the title character. This road test was essential in realising the extent of the director's ambition. While he has done motion capture before on *The Adventures Of Tintin*, that was purely animated. Adding live action to the mix, he feels *The BFG* is the most ambitious mo-cap performance ever attempted.

"The hardest thing about this film was scale," says Spielberg. "It's a relationship picture. Even though there are other characters, it's really between Sophie and BFG. Because it was a personal story between two characters, eye contact meant everything, not just to the actors delivering credible emotional performances but to the audience believing they were in the same space relating to each other."

To avoid mismatching eye-lines, commonly known as Jar Jar-itis, Spielberg went through a painstaking process. Firstly, he performance-captured Rylance on a Vancouver set dressed with Styrofoam props, acting to a six-inch doll of Sophie, with Ruby Barnhill (who plays the ten-year-old) delivering lines. It took Rylance two hours to prep, first in make-up, then as the unflattering ping-pong leotard suit was calibrated with the computers of VFX outfit Weta. "If Scarlett Johansson comes on set," he suggests, "you are going to put a dressing gown on." Spielberg would then retire to the mo-cap tent and invent new angles around his performance. "He could put the camera anywhere," says Rylance. "He could put it up my arse if he wanted to."

The crew would then move to the next stage, which housed the same set but with huge props, with Rylance on an >



extended scissor lift up near the ceiling to provide Barnhill with a focal point.

Things got interesting when the BFG had to walk. “We would fly an iPad showing Mark’s face on a wire across the space,” says Spielberg. “It was very important Ruby believed that BFG was always there.”

To maintain veracity, Spielberg used a SimulCam, a huge monitor that combined both the Rylance and Barnhill shots into one, adding a “real-time animation of BFG’s girth to see if they were making true eye contact.” The proposition was complicated even further when the bigger giants (including Jemaine Clement and Bill Hader, scaled up to 50 feet or more) invade the BFG’s cave, creating three different scales in one shot. The trick was to bring in an even smaller scaled doll of Sophie and have Rylance crawl on his hands and knees to keep consistency with the bigger giants.

“Technically it was one of the hardest movies I’ve ever made,” Spielberg says. “I haven’t worked this hard on the technical side of a very personal and sensitive story since *Jurassic Park*.” But if cinema’s most gifted technician was stretched, he had to bring his VFX-innocent cast with him: a true thespian and a kid doing her first-ever film.

GETTING TO THE perfect Sophie took far longer than anticipated. In fact, Spielberg took it right down to the wire. He looked to the UK and beyond (the US, New Zealand, Australia) for six months, but “couldn’t find a Sophie I liked or even came close to liking. I was on the verge of panic because we were committing millions of dollars to a production which was imminent, and I hadn’t found my girl.” Spielberg was watching 30 audition tapes a week when he finally spotted Ruby Barnhill. Her reading was, according to the director, “tender and timid but there was an untapped fire in her eyes.” He flew the then ten year-old actress to Berlin, set up an improvisation session with his wife Kate Capshaw and was bowled over. “Everything I saw her holding back in her audition was pouring out of her in the room. I knew by the end of the day that she had the part.”

Spielberg pays tribute to Barnhill’s imagination and ability to be “in step with the tone I was trying to achieve.” Rylance was equally impressed by Barnhill — “Ruby sustained a performance



Top: The BFG with his bigger, less friendly giant brethren.

Above: Producers Frank Marshall and Kathleen Kennedy with Spielberg and Barnhill.

over a long period. She’s a natural” — and relished the opportunity to watch the world’s greatest director of children first-hand. “He loves children,” says Rylance. “He is fascinated by their imagination. He is delighted by their humour and excitement about life.”

Watching Spielberg at work was, for an actor new to VFX-driven blockbusters, a fair trade for the mo-cap attire and extensive downtime (spent playing ping-pong with the Weta guys — “funny considering they were looking at my dots all day”). “To be truthful about him, he is very demanding on his crew,” says Rylance. “You don’t make mistakes on his technical stuff. But with the actors, he



is very encouraging, warm and receptive.”

If any aspect of *The BFG* came easily it was finding his lead actor. It's the second time they've worked together following Rylance's Oscar-winning turn in last year's *Bridge Of Spies*. Spielberg made the decision to cast Rylance as the BFG on the first day of *Spies*' shoot. The actor committed to the film the very next day, but not without voicing his concern that, "It would just be a dry, technical job." But Spielberg made good on his promise to keep things playful, Rylance describing the process as "liberating, like experimental theatre."

Spielberg gave the actor free rein to create his own BFG, so Rylance cherry-picked elements from his own life. BFG's expressive ears are inspired by Rylance's Jack Russell Terrier, Apache, his distinctive walk "borrowed" from Chris van Kampen, father of his step-daughter, Juliet. "She broke down in tears when she saw the trailer because it was her favourite book," says Rylance. "She was enamoured that both her natural father and her step-father are manifested." And it wasn't just Juliet who was impressed. Rylance has now joined Spielberg's next two films, Young Adult sci-fi adaptation *Ready Player One* and historical drama *The Kidnapping Of Edgardo Mortara*,

making him the first actor to take four prominent roles in four consecutive Spielberg films.

"It's incredible," marvels Rylance. "He usually believes his actors so much, he can't hire them in the next film because he still thinks they are playing the last character. So it must mean that I am a crap actor. You'll know when I've done some good acting when I don't get hired by him anymore."

It's unlikely. As their adventure together on *The BFG* confirms, it's a collaboration built on artistic play in the face of creative odds.

"If it was ever possible to offer one human being a thousand years of life, I would put Steven Spielberg at the front of the queue because he is the one who would make the most of it," says Rylance. "Steven feels things deeply but he is so curious about the world and the possibilities of where humanity is going, technologically and compassionately."

In this scenario, Spielberg will still be making whatever passes for movies in 2946. That's a lot of stories to tell, and challenges to conquer. He wouldn't have it any other way. ■

THE BFG IS OUT ON JULY 22 AND WILL BE REVIEWED IN A FUTURE ISSUE.

Initial Impressions

BFG = BIG FRIENDLY GIANT. EASY. BUT WHAT DO THESE STAND FOR?



1 M.A.S.H. (1970)

- a) Military Asshats Spread Hilarity
- b) Mobile Army Surgical Hospital
- c) Multiple Audio-track Soundclash Horror

2 F.I.S.T. (1978)

- a) Forgotten Italian Stallion Tale
- b) Fighting Is Stallone's Trade
- c) Federation of Inter-State Truckers

3 C.H.U.D. (1984)

- a) Cinematic Happenings Under Development
- b) Crappy Horror Unless Drunk
- c) Cannibalistic Humanoid Underground Dwellers

4 D.A.R.Y.L. (1985)

- a) Data-Analysing Robot Youth Life-form
- b) Diddy Android Rascal Yearns for Life
- c) Dandy Austrian Rangers Yodel Loudly

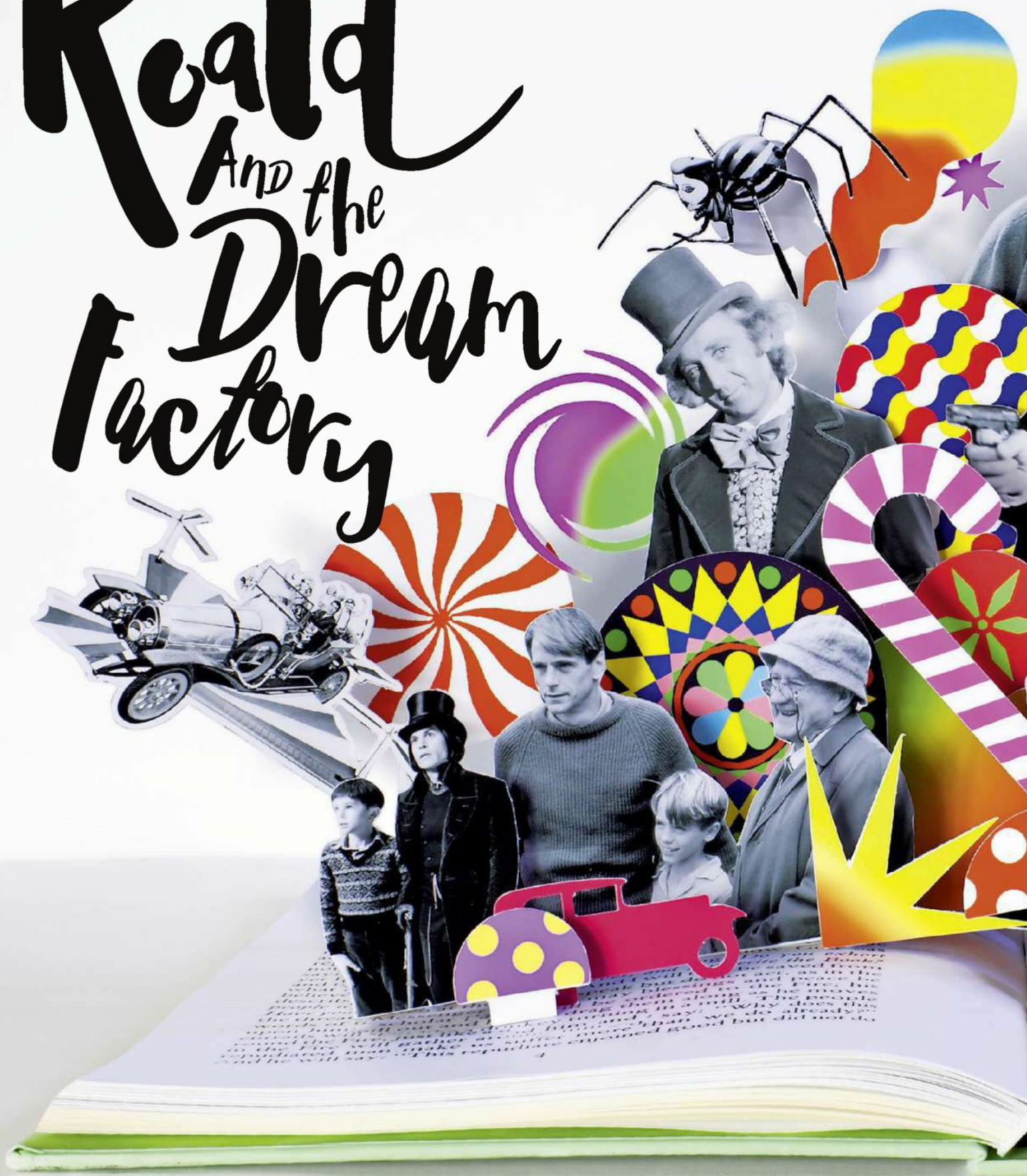
5 B.A.P.S. (1997)

- a) Black American Princesses
- b) Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha
- c) Tee-hee, "Baps"

6 J.C.V.D. (2008)

- a) Jesus Christ Venereal Disease
 - b) Jasper Carrott Venereal Disease
 - c) Jean-Claude Van Damme
- DAN JOLIN

Reald *And the* Dream Factory



Whether battling
berating Jim Her
children's auth
was determined
industry

WORDS ALE
ILLUSTRATION

WORDS **ALEX GODFREY**
ILLUSTRATION **JAMES TAYLOR**

IN NOVEMBER 1942, ROALD DAHL ARRIVED IN Hollywood.

A party had been thrown in his honour at The Beverly Hills Hotel, by Walt Disney himself. Here, for Dahl's benefit, Spencer Tracy and Charlie Chaplin acted out portions of a story the 26 year-old RAF pilot had recently cooked up about gremlins, mischievous imaginary critters blamed by airmen whenever there were technical difficulties. The story had dazzled Disney after he'd received it from the RAF (which needed to approve anything Dahl wrote while in its service), and he was determined to adapt it into an animated feature.

Dahl was far from becoming the celebrated children's writer we know him as today, author of such wildly popular adventures as *James And The Giant Peach*, *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory* and *The BFG*; in fact, he was yet to have a book published. But here he was in Los Angeles, working directly with the biggest name in family entertainment, on a book to accompany the film, both titled *The Gremlins*.

Dahl had secured RAF approval on any creative decisions during development. It didn't take long for the arguments to start with Walt Disney. He revealed design ideas; Dahl complained they lacked the requisite expressiveness. Disney licensed the characters to Life Saver mints for advertising purposes; Dahl hit the roof ("The legend will be ruined!" he wrote to the studio boss).

Disney quickly tired of Dahl's demands. "With the amount of money that is required to spend on a feature of this type," he wrote to the writer, "we cannot be subjected to the whims of certain people, including yourself." He then killed the film. The process was proving too painful, and taking too long; by the time it was released, he felt, the war would be over, and it would seem stale. (The book, nevertheless, was published in 1943, selling a healthy 80,000 copies before being discontinued due to

wartime paper rations.)

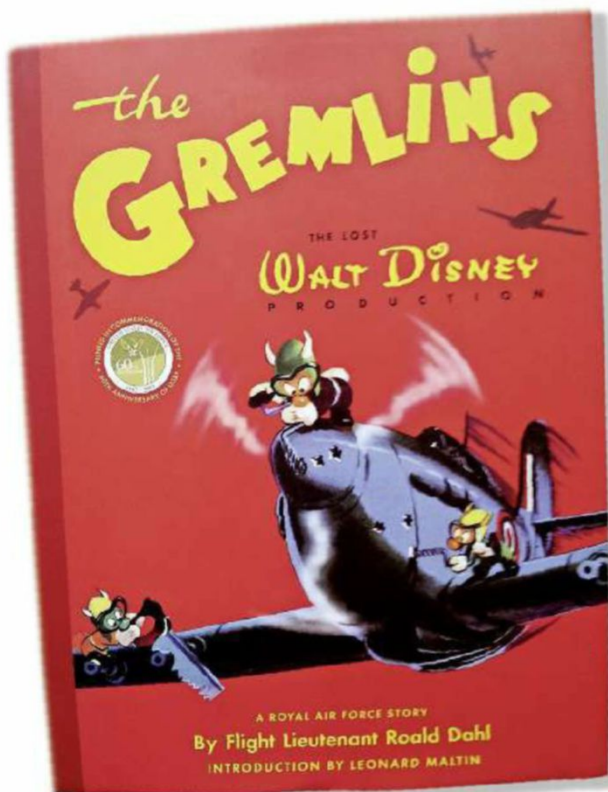
Bullish, passionate, seemingly intimidated by nobody, this little-known writer with no experience in both the literary and the film worlds had just gone head-to-head with one of the most powerful men in Hollywood. And he was only just getting started.

A STRIKING SIX-FOOT

-six, Dahl was an imposing figure and an obstinate opponent, a man hardened by his formative years. Born in Cardiff in 1916 to Norwegian parents, his heritage gave him an outsider's sensibility that was further toughened by English boarding schools. When he was three his sister, four years his senior, died of peritonitis. Weeks later his father passed away from pneumonia. And in 1940, Dahl crashed his RAF Gloster Gladiator in the Libyan desert, resulting in a fractured skull and a smashed-in nose, which required facial reconstruction. Dahl had survived a lot. He certainly wasn't afraid to bicker with film producers.

His experience on *The Gremlins* showed how fiercely protective he was of his often deeply personal creations. In the summer of 1942, two years after the plane crash, he was still suffering awful headaches and blackouts and, no longer able to fly, was stationed in Washington, D. C. There he found solace in writing, and *The Gremlins* was the result, inspired directly by the crash: in the story the creatures help rehabilitate a downed airman, just as writing about them was helping Dahl.

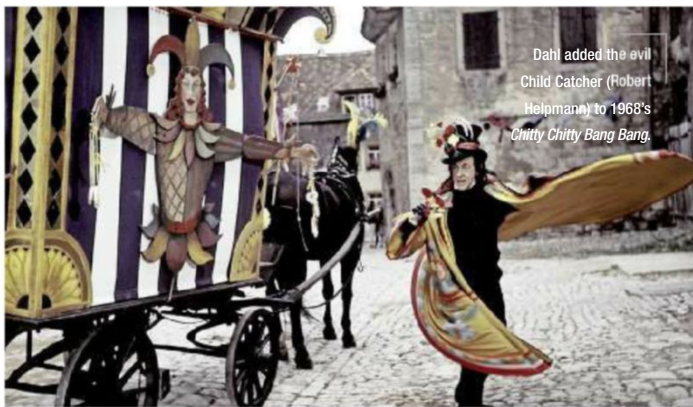
Disney ditched the adaptation, though Hollywood's attention had been drawn to Dahl, who was on his way to becoming a full-time writer of adult fiction. (Over the next couple of decades he would write a slew of magnificently macabre short stories, such as human-taxidermy horror *The Landlady*, and *Lamb To The Slaughter*, in which



• ALLSTAR (1), CAMERA PRESS (1), KOBAL (1)



Roald Dahl (right) with director Lewis Gilbert on the set of 1967's *You Only Live Twice*. Below left: The 2006 reissue of Dahl's *The Gremlins*, his first foray into filmmaking.



Dahl added the evil Child Catcher (Robert Helpmann) to 1968's *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*.



Mel Stuart's *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory* (1971).

a woman kills her husband with a frozen leg of mutton then serves it to investigating police officers.) But the film industry would continue to frustrate him. In 1956 he did a rewrite of *Moby Dick* for John Huston, which Huston then rewrote himself; there was some financial squabbling, and an aggrieved Dahl said he'd never work for Huston again. In 1965, Robert Altman (then a young TV director) approached Dahl with an idea for a film about a World War I air raid on a Zeppelin base, and asked for him to write and sell it on condition that Altman would direct. Dahl duly sold his script to United Artists, and company head David Picker loved it, but refused to hire Altman, who hadn't yet directed a feature. The eventual film, *Oh, Death, Where Is Thy Sting-A-Ling-Ling*, directed by David Miller and starring Gregory Peck and future Gandalf Ian McKellen, was abandoned weeks into production, when early snow hit the Alps-based production.

It did, though, lead to Dahl's only truly happy screenwriting job. In March 1966, impressed with what he'd done with Altman's idea, Picker recommended to the James Bond producers that Dahl write fifth Bond movie *You Only Live Twice*. Ian Fleming, a friend of Dahl's from when they worked together for the Secret Intelligence Service in 1942, had died two years earlier, and Cubby Broccoli told Dahl he could dump practically the entire story. Which was just as well. "It was Ian Fleming's worst book," he said to interviewer Tom Soter in 1980, "with no plot in it which would even make a movie."

Privately, Dahl told his American publisher Alfred Knopf, he found the project "exceptionally distasteful", and was concerned it might damage his literary reputation. But he did it anyway for the much-needed cash. Director Lewis Gilbert loved it, much to Dahl's amusement — in a letter to his own agent, Dahl said the script, which he wrote in just eight weeks, was "the biggest load of bullshit I have ever put my hand to". He was happy, though, that barely a word was changed. "What I admired so much about Lewis Gilbert was that he just took the screenplay and shot it," Dahl said years later. "That's the way to direct: you either trust your writer or you don't."

In late 1966, pleased with Dahl's work on *You Only Live Twice*, Broccoli hired him to adapt Fleming's *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*. The process was a disaster. Dahl didn't care for the book but had some fun with it, adding

a character of his own creation, one which would become one of cinema's greatest children's villains: the creepy, net-wielding Child Catcher. However, Broccoli described Dahl's script as "a piece of shit" and asked director Ken Hughes to rewrite the whole thing. "You've seen the result," an upset Dahl told an interviewer about the film, which he called "ghastly".

All these film-industry confrontations and disappointments came on top of what had been several torturous years in Dahl's personal life. The family were living between New York, where his wife, Patricia Neal, was a successful stage actor, and Gipsy House, their sanctuary in Great Missenden, Buckinghamshire. In 1960, their baby son Theo's pram had been hit by a taxi, hurling the boy across the street, causing brain damage and hydrocephalus. Then in 1962, his seven-year-old daughter Olivia died. She had been recovering from measles when, one morning, she told Dahl she felt sleepy; she was dead 12 hours later from measles encephalitis. Dahl fell into depression. He was, according to Neal's autobiography, "destroyed".

Dahl himself was ill with severe back problems resulting from his 1940 plane crash, and a kidney stone. Then in 1965 Neal, while pregnant, suffered three severe strokes. So Dahl was screenwriting for the money, to pay Theo and Neal's ongoing medical bills, and was also spending time caring for their four kids while Neal recovered. To make matters worse, in 1967, while Dahl was in hospital for a back operation, his mother died.

There was, at least, success elsewhere in his life — the kind that finally defined him as an artist, and made his career.

DAHL HAD BECOME

a fully fledged children's author in 1961 with *James And The Giant Peach*. He'd struggled to come up with new ideas for his adult stories, but had been inventing tales for his own children at bedtime, and with this in mind, Dahl's literary agent had persuaded him to write for kids. Inspired by the insects in his garden, Dahl wrote *James*, about an orphan who travels the world in a colossal fruit. Writing it creatively freed Dahl, and he'd immediately set about writing more children's titles.

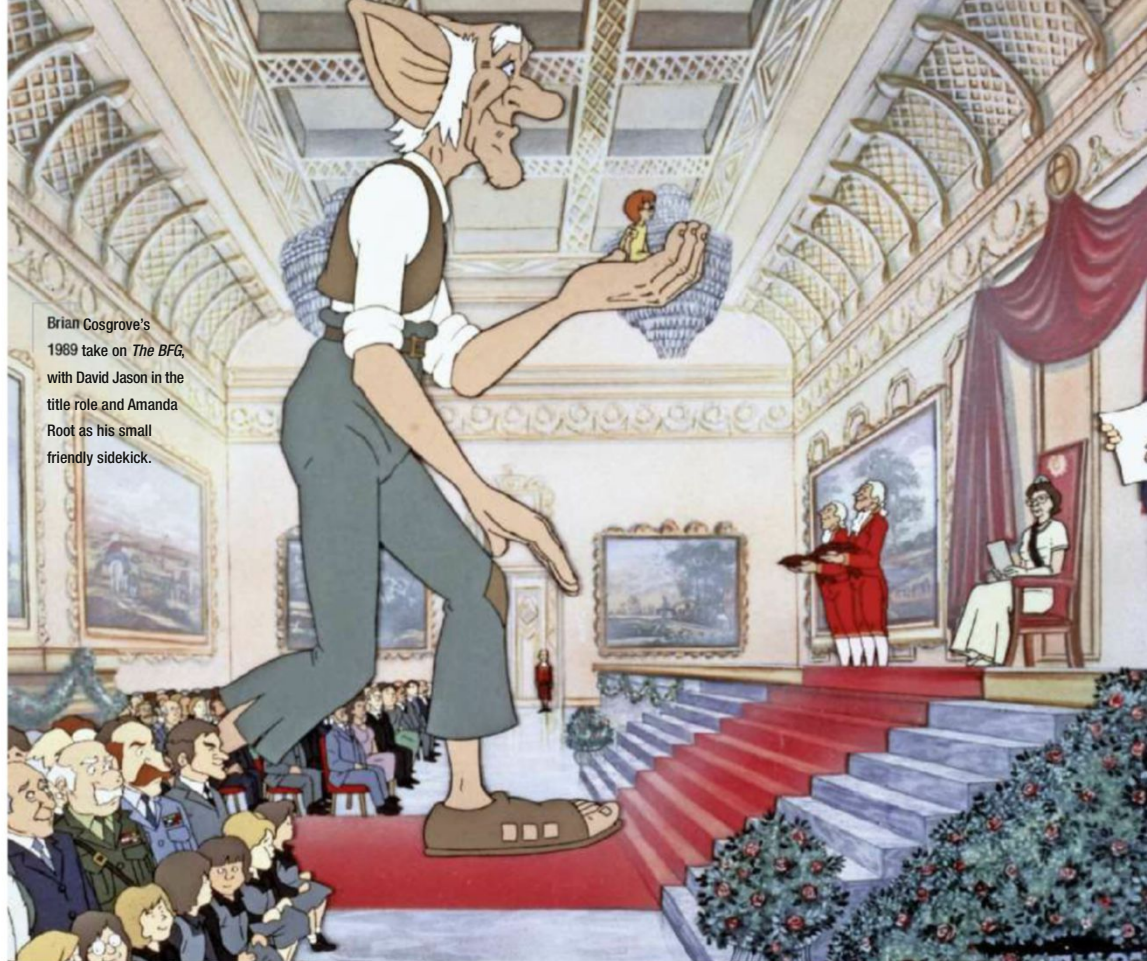
In 1969, a year after *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*'s release, he sold the rights

to the first of his children's books to be adapted for the big screen, namely *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory* — on condition he write the screenplay himself. Director Mel Stuart was ecstatic. But all hope of harmony was soon lost. Dahl wanted absurdist British comedian Spike Milligan to play Wonka, but Stuart cast American actor Gene Wilder. Dahl was incensed: Stuart was ruining Wonka, just as Walt Disney had messed with *The Gremlins* all those years before. Dahl told producer David Wolper he'd disown the film and campaign against it in the media — a promise the author kept until he died.

Furthermore, Stuart, unhappy with Dahl's script — which he believed lacked conflict — employed first-time screenwriter David Seltzer to introduce new elements, including Wonka's nemesis, Slugworth. Dahl was furious, and detested the resulting film: because of Gene Wilder's performance ("pretentious"), because of Stuart's direction ("no talent or flair"), because of its narrative deviations. Even the name had been changed, to *Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory*, as the film had been part-funded by Quaker Oats to promote a Wonka chocolate bar (which never got made), and also in reaction to concerns raised by a group of African American actors that 'Charlie' was pejorative slang for a white overseer. Mostly, though, Dahl was angry that it had been rewritten.

"Here you have a bestselling book, an enduring book, and they bugger the film up," he said in 1983. He felt validated by the film's lack of success at the box office (on its initial release in the US it made only \$4 million against a \$3 million budget), and began telling interviewers how much he hated filmmakers in general. Scarred particularly by his experiences with *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* and *Charlie*, he now resented the industry. "I am wildly disillusioned about writing films," he wrote to a colleague in 1972, "because they always seem to get screwed up somewhere in the works, either by egocentric directors or idiotic producers." He was so enraged, he refused anyone permission to film the book's sequel, *Charlie And The Great Glass Elevator*, although he would sell the rights to his subsequent books and hope for the best.

By the 1980s, Dahl was a happier man. The family tragedies receded into memories, albeit painful ones, and having divorced Neal he married set designer Felicity Crossland in 1983. His children's books were credible and commercial successes, and he had



Brian Cosgrove's 1989 take on *The BFG*, with David Jason in the title role and Amanda Root as his small friendly sidekick.

a far better experience with the next two adaptations of his work. He was pleased with the 1989 British TV adaptation of *The BFG*, an animated film with David Jason voicing the giant who blows dreams into children's bedrooms. Dahl and his family attended a screening arranged by director Brian Cosgrove, and "when the film was finished they all stood up and applauded," says Cosgrove. "It was heartwarming, to know that I delivered something that he liked, especially knowing how forthright he could be if he didn't like something." Scottish director Gavin Millar had a similar experience with Dahl on his TV adaptation of *Danny The Champion Of The World*, starring Jeremy Irons as a countryside widower, and Irons' son Samuel as Danny. "He says it is the best version of his work ever made, which is a relief to me because he can be sharp when he does not like something," Millar told Glasgow's *Herald* at the time. Dahl certainly liked it more than Nicolas Roeg's *The Witches*.

Despite the inherent joyousness of his children's books, Dahl had never discarded the macabre humour he was known for in his adult fiction. His children's stories were full of grisly incidents, tempered with comedy, and that balance was vital to him — he wanted children to delight in the darkness. *The Witches* book ends with the boy hero having been turned into a mouse, but happy to remain one, killing witches with his grandmother for the remainder of his days. Roeg and producer Jim Henson



Anjelica Huston and Jane Horrocks in *The Witches* (1990). Dahl hated the new ending. Below: 1996's *James And The Giant Peach*.



There's Fighting Words

DAHL WAS HARDLY THE ONLY AUTHOR PREPARED TO SPEAK OUT AGAINST THE FILM ADAPTATIONS OF THEIR WORK

RAYMOND CHANDLER

During his time as a screenwriter, the creator of detective Philip Marlowe often fell out with his collaborators, calling Alfred Hitchcock a "fat bastard" and Billy Wilder a "Nazi". In a piece for *The Atlantic*, Chandler wrote that Hollywood was "an endless contention of tawdry egos."



F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

In 1937, the broke *Great Gatsby* author moved into screenwriting but struggled, working on numerous films that went nowhere. "Isn't Hollywood a dump — in the human sense of the word," he said in 1940. "A hideous town... full of the human spirit at a new low of debasement."



TRUMAN CAPOTE

For the adaptation of his 1958 novella *Breakfast At Tiffany's*, Capote wanted Marilyn Monroe for society girl Holly Golightly. When Audrey Hepburn was cast, he said, "Paramount double-crossed me in every conceivable way." Of the film he said, "It made me want to throw up."



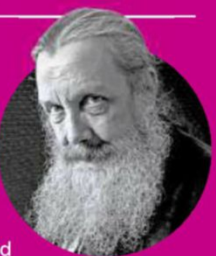
P. L. TRAVERS

As you'll know if you've seen *Saving Mr. Banks*, the *Mary Poppins* author battled Disney throughout its production. As you won't know if you've seen *Saving Mr. Banks*, she detested the result. "I was so shocked I felt that I would never write — let alone smile — again!" she wrote to her lawyer.



ALAN MOORE

The author of *Watchmen*, *From Hell* and *V For Vendetta* refuses cash or credit for any of the adaptations he so loathes, and has little time for the industry. Example: "It is as if we are freshly hatched birds looking up with our mouths open waiting for Hollywood to feed us more regurgitated worms."



Dahl pictured at his home, Gipsy House, in Great Missenden, Buckinghamshire, on December 12, 1983.

filmed it as such in 1988, but also shot an ending in which the boy was transformed back into a human, and when test audiences responded more positively to that one, Henson went with it, infuriating Dahl.

By 1990, he was very ill with leukaemia, and wasn't taking prisoners. In February he saw an early screening of *The Witches* and found it vulgar and distasteful, lacking his own characteristic humour. He pleaded with Henson to reconsider the "appalling" ending. "The boy is happy as a mouse," Dahl wrote to him. "He tells us so. And there is a fair bit of elementary philosophy in it, too. What, after all, is so marvellous about being a human? Mice are far happier." But his efforts failed, so he wrote to producer Duncan Kenworthy, formally requesting to have his name — and the title of the book — removed from the credits. If not, he said he would do his best "with press conferences etc. to ensure that children don't go and see the film." Henson persuaded him to relent. Then, a few months later, Dahl died. He was 74.

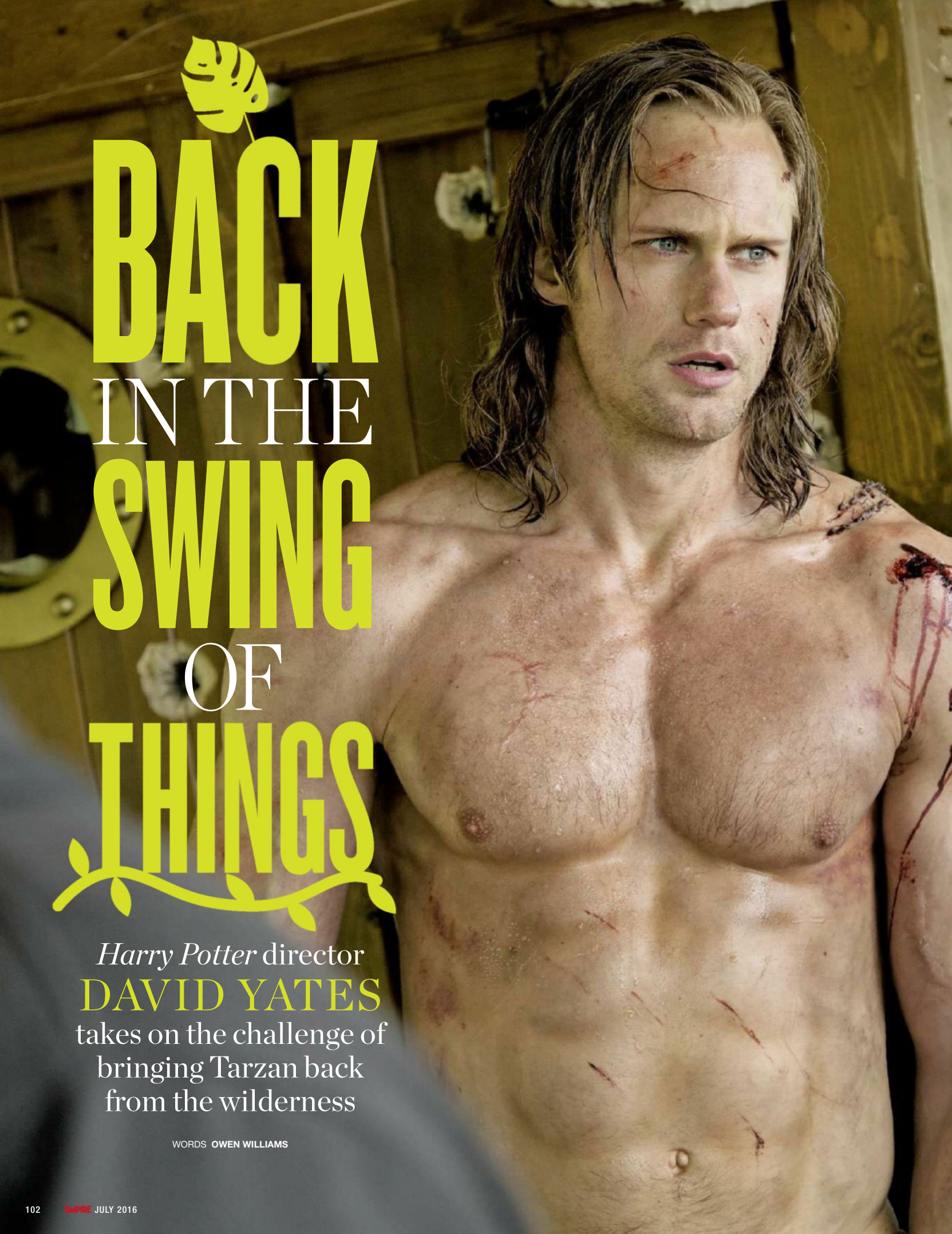
ADAPTING DAHL'S

work is now a very different process. Unlike Dahl, his estate, marshalled by his wife, and now Luke Kelly, his grandson, has full approval on adaptations, ensuring the films are, as Kelly says, "commercially respectful and creatively exciting. Roald didn't necessarily have that luxury." The process each time has proved

harmonious, with the directors providing their own authorial stamps while retaining the essence of the work, and mostly yielding great results: Danny DeVito's *Matilda*, Henry Selick's *James And The Giant Peach* and Wes Anderson's *Fantastic Mr. Fox* are widely appreciated. Tim Burton's *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory* was pitched as a more faithful retelling of the book, though ultimately, with its attempt to psychologically flesh out Wonka, it deviated even further than Mel Stuart's original.

What Dahl would have made of these films is anyone's guess, but that's not the point, says Kelly: "It's not about figuring out what Roald would have liked or his views on how a story should be adapted. It's about what feels truest to the work — to the spirit of the work." Steven Spielberg's *The BFG*, says Kelly, certainly does.

It's an important film for the family. This year is the centenary of Dahl's birth, and *The BFG* meant a lot to him. The book opens with the dedication: "For Olivia. 20 April 1955 – 17 November 1962." He developed it during the late '60s, after her death, through making up those bedtime stories for her sisters, Ophelia and Lucy. At night, the lofty author would even position a ladder outside their bedroom window, climbing up it and blowing 'dreams' into their room via a bamboo cane filled with glitter. It was, he would say, to help them to have happy dreams. The girls were wise to him, but they humoured him nevertheless. Their dad, Ophelia later said, needed happy dreams too. ■



BACK IN THE SWING OF THINGS

Harry Potter director
DAVID YATES
takes on the challenge of
bringing Tarzan back
from the wilderness

WORDS OWEN WILLIAMS





Five years ago, David Yates might justifiably have taken a very long holiday. The director had just said goodbye to Harry Potter with the series' final instalment, *The Deathly Hallows — Part 2*. After four films, half a decade and north of \$4 billion at the box office he'd certainly earned a break, but his thoughts instead turned immediately to his next project. Unsurprisingly, stacks of screenplays had come his way — "Lots of sci-fi, lots of things blowing up," he says. The director who'd just brought one of cinema's most successful series to a spectacular conclusion had his pick. But one in particular called out to him. A surprising one.

"*The Legend Of Tarzan* felt the most enjoyable of everything I'd been reading," Yates tells *Empire*. A film based on a character who hasn't been seen on a cinema screen since Disney's animated version in 1999? "I just liked the idea of a really old-fashioned and joyful, romantic action-adventure picture," he says. "Yes, Tarzan had gone out of fashion, and wasn't necessarily ever done that well in

its earlier incarnations, but they were delightful in their way. I felt that, just as *Batman* had been through reinventions, Tarzan was ready for that too."

IT WOULD HARDLY BE HIS

first. During the 20th century the lost, ape-raised English lord was ubiquitous. His creator, Edgar Rice Burroughs, wrote more than 40 novels and short stories about him between 1912 and 1947. Other authors (among them Fritz Leiber, Philip José Farmer and Andy Briggs) later wrote even more. There were comics, cartoons, stage plays and radio serials. And there were movies: 90 between the silent era and today. The most popular series, which began with Johnny Weissmuller in the title role in 1932 and ended with Mike Henry in 1968, ran to 28 films. After that, the pace began to slow, but there were still live-action TV shows, school-holiday re-runs of the old films, and occasional cinematic adventures: the ill-fated erotic take with Bo Derek in 1981 (*Tarzan The Ape Man*); Hugh Hudson's handsome but

austere *Greystoke: The Legend Of Tarzan, Lord Of The Apes* in 1984; and Disney's '99 version. The character's popularity endured. "I was a Tarzan fan; that's why I came to this," says Samuel L. Jackson, who plays US envoy George Washington Williams in Yates' movie. "Gordon Scott was *my* Tarzan on the big screen, but I watched Johnny Weissmuller on TV. We played Tarzan when I was a kid, and jumped from tree to tree and did shit."

We haven't yet, however, seen a live-action Tarzan in cinemas this millennium. Not counting the swiftly cancelled Warner Bros. TV series of the early 2000s starring a pre-*Vikings* Travis Fimmel, the last actor to swing on a vine with Jane was Casper Van Dien in 1998's *Tarzan And The Lost City*... which had its budget slashed during production, limped to a paltry \$2 million at the box office, and has never even been available on DVD in the UK.

So it's hardly surprising to learn it took producer Jerry Weintraub a decade to get *The Legend Of Tarzan* into production. Directors Guillermo del Toro and Stephen Sommers came into and out of the picture

Samuel L. Jackson's George Washington Williams and Alexander Skarsgård's John Clayton rumble in the jungle.



Above: Djimon Hounsou as Chief Mbonga, who appeared in Edgar Rice Burroughs' Tarzan tales. Left: Margot Robbie offers a more modern take on Jane.

in 2006 and 2008 respectively, before he finally locked things down with Yates, and an entirely new script, in 2012. Even after that, there was a temporary shut-down in 2013, when it became apparent the budget was too small. "It's been a real struggle to match the vision with the money," says Yates, though he'd achieved that by the time the film finally went into pre-production in February 2014. *John Carter* — another Burroughs property — didn't help his cause, with Disney's high-profile adaptation bombing in 2012. While, even in a dormant state, Tarzan retains wider cultural name-recognition than Carter, reviving him remains a risk in a world where the modern superhero blockbuster is all-conquering.

"I actually *do* think of this as a superhero movie," says David Barron

(Yates' producer on this and his *Harry Potter* films). "Tarzan's senses are very finely tuned and he has this great physical prowess as a result of his upbringing. It's not a superhero movie like we're used to, though: we are treating it as a proper, grown-up Tarzan story based in reality." Yates insists this is "a modern, eco-Tarzan. His world is amazing, and it deserves to be represented properly, in a way that's really possible now, with that proper wallop of action and entertainment and scale."

DON'T CONFUSE "MODERN"

with "present day", however. Part of Tarzan's charm, for Yates, lies in the richness of his historical setting: the wild animals, the tribesmen and the verdant

Congolese vistas. Though at source, those elements are problematic, stemming as they do from Burroughs' ignorant fantasies: the 'Scramble For Africa' was far from over at the time Burroughs first began writing. By 21st-century standards, Burroughs' work is naively racist, so key to Tarzan's reinvention was rooting him in an historically accurate past: "redefining him by an understanding of the world", as Yates puts it.

Avoiding the much-told origin story (although Yates says there are more early-Tarzan flashbacks than were planned, due to test audiences "longing for them"), screenwriters Adam Cozad and Craig Brewer introduce a Tarzan already living in England as John Clayton, Lord Greystoke. Plucking a thread from Burroughs' books which saw Tarzan undertaking diplomatic missions for European governments, *Legend* plunges him back into the Congo on a British-American operation to investigate the activities of the Belgian King Leopold II.

A real historical villain, during the late 1800s Leopold ruthlessly exploited the Congo for its rubber crop, resulting in mass enslavement and genocide. Modern estimates put the number of Congolese deaths attributable to his regime in the millions. With this as a context, you can hardly accuse the film of romanticising colonialism. "It is a big, exciting action film," explains Alexander Skarsgård, who Yates cast as his lord of the jungle. "But this is the reality that Tarzan comes back to in the Congo: an appalling situation that wasn't there when he was growing up."

Tough times for
Tarzan in Take 2.



Outside Africa, Leopold was presenting himself to the world as a philanthropist, and when bankruptcy threatened, he appealed internationally for financial support. So Tarzan joins George Washington Williams (Jackson) on a fact-finding mission that quickly goes wrong. Leopold himself doesn't appear on screen, but his dastardly interests are represented by the movie's principal villain, Léon Rom (Christoph Waltz). Both Williams and Rom are historical characters: Rom is thought to be an inspiration for the brutal Colonel Kurtz in Joseph Conrad's *Heart Of Darkness*; Washington a lawyer and Civil War veteran whose open letter to Leopold in 1890 hastened the end of his so-called Congo Free State.

"I didn't know George Washington Williams' story until I started talking to people about this job," says Jackson, "but after that I read a lot. He was the first African-American from the United States to go into the Congo and oppose the slave trade. He was an interesting guy." He's also a counter to the 'white saviour' trope, by which white characters solve problems



Animated but
still deadly: David
Yates eschewed
performance capture
for his apes.



Director David Yates (centre) briefs Christoph Waltz, who plays the corrupt Captain Rom.

for people of colour: one more example of *The Legend Of Tarzan's* determination to be culturally and racially cognizant.

"We were very sensitive to the more dated aspects of the classic stories," says Yates. "One of the appeals and challenges of the script was that it was rooted in this terrible, powerful, disturbing aspect of African history while still keeping all the iconic aspects of the Tarzan you know. If even one person in that multiplex audience goes away and reads a little bit about George Washington Williams, we've achieved something."

THOUGH AFRICAN HISTORY

was important to the production, Yates didn't shoot in Africa itself. Playing the part of the Congo is his old *Harry Potter* stomping ground, Leavesden Studios (new Jane Margot Robbie, when *Empire* meets her on set, is excited to learn that we're standing on Hagrid's hill). Only some plate shots, to "wrap Gabon around the sets", Yates says, were filmed on location.

There's something fitting about this. The films of the '40s, '50s and '60s were similarly shot on studio backlots, with the more exotic animals slotted in via stock footage. But they were B pictures through and through, lacking anything close to the budget Yates has to facilitate some extraordinarily detailed production design. "The old films were always a bit under-realised," says Yates. "This time we've got the resources, even though we're only in Watford."

Empire can hear the M25 from the savannah village where we watch Skarsgård, Robbie and Jackson arrive to a spirited tribal welcome. We can also hear it from the mountain valley set, with its 50-foot waterfall and craggy cliffs. But it's at least quiet within C Stage, which houses the production's magnificently realised Congolese jungle.

There's a smell of wet peat and bark as we poke around here. Mud squelches underfoot and water gathers at the roof, creating a misty micro-climate. Massive canopies of hand-moulded leaves brush against us as we meander alongside a river with a fully adjustable water level.

You can walk a long way through this jungle before encountering any technology — as long as you don't look up to see the light boxes on the ceiling.

While the flora may be physically present, the fauna — including thousands of wildebeest which stampede through the colonial town of Boma at the film's climax — are entirely digital. Which is less of a surprise than the fact that Yates and his team have avoided the performance-capture approach, even for the apes.

"I didn't want to tie myself into human performances," explains visual effects supervisor Tim Burke. "We don't need our animals to do things that are unnatural for them, as they did in *Life Of Pi* or *Dawn Of The Planet Of The Apes*. Our creatures are in their natural habitat." Again, rather appropriately, the film is using something close to those old stock-animal-footage-insertion techniques, albeit in a vastly more sophisticated manner. "We've been capturing a lot of reference at wildlife parks in Gabon and in this country," Burke says. "We've been photo-scanning real animals. It's all been about creating a library of performance."

ONCE YATES IS DONE WITH

his other 2016 movie — *Harry Potter* franchise extension *Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them* — he's ready, he says, to return to his new/old hero... Assuming his epic, big-budget and tonally modernised approach lands with the 21st-century audience. "We're excited," he says. "We've been thinking a lot about a second Tarzan and how it picks up from this one. It all depends on how it does in July, but we've got a pretty good outline and we're ready to go with that straightaway."

Superman was created in 1938; Batman in 1939; Captain America in 1941. One hundred-and-four years after his own first appearance, it feels right that Tarzan, *The Lord Of The Jungle*, is about to return alongside them. He's been gone for far too long. ■

THE LEGEND OF TARZAN IS OUT ON JULY 8 AND WILL BE REVIEWED IN A FUTURE ISSUE.

FORGOTTEN HEROES

ONCE THEY WERE HUGE — NOW WE'D BE AMAZED TO SEE THEM MAKE A TARZAN-STYLE COMEBACK

JUNGLE JIM

Johnny Weissmuller's signature role after Tarzan was a safari-suited hunter based on a newspaper comic strip. He starred in 16 films between 1948 and 1956, and in the last three, thanks to rights issues, the character was also called Johnny Weissmuller.



THE SHADOW

Though more of a radio hero, this masked vigilante did enjoy a healthy secondary career on film. Six shorts, a serial and four features were made between 1931 and 1958. Russell Mulcahy made a new movie in 1994, starring Alec Baldwin, but it flopped.



BLONDIE

Comic-strip heroine Blondie Boopadoop ditzed through 28 comedy feature film adventures between 1938 and 1950. Penny Singleton — also the voice of Jane Jetson — played her in every one.



ROY ROGERS

Singing cowboy Rogers made more than 100 movies during the '30s, '40s and '50s, usually playing a character called Roy Rogers. He was a merchandising phenomenon, his name becoming a brand second only to Walt Disney.



ROCKET MAN

Nothing to do with Elton John but the basis for the later *Rocketeer* comics and 1991 Disney movie, the masked and jet-packed Rocket Man was the hero of four 12-part Republic Pictures film serials between 1949 and 1953.



CHARLIE CHAN

The globetrotting Honolulu detective investigated 50-odd screen cases between 1926 and 1949. Usually played by a white actor (the Swedish Warner Oland from 1931 to 1938), he's now seen as an outdated Asian stereotype.







SCENES FROM THE REVOLUTION

It was dismissed as a vanity project from a pop star with more ambition than filmmaking talent. But **Purple Rain** went on to knock *Ghostbusters* from the number one slot and turn its creator, Prince, into a megastar

WORDS ALEX GODFREY



WHEN SELF-PROCLAIMED “SUPERSTAR

publicist” Howard Bloom started working with Prince in December 1980, the first thing he did was ask to spend some time with the rising pop star. Bloom specifically wanted to discover, as he puts it, “the things that had shaped Prince emotionally”. To that end, he flew to the Shea theatre in Buffalo, New York, where the then 22-year-old was rehearsing for his *Dirty Mind* tour, and the two talked through the night. He finally found what he was looking for around dawn.

“He told me this story of his mother taking him, at the age of five, to a big theatre,” says Bloom. “All the seats were pointed at the stage and there was a spotlight on the centre of the stage, and who’s in the spotlight? His dad, on piano. And behind his dad were five of the most beautiful women Prince had ever seen.” While his father played, the women danced, and the audience screamed. “And that,” says Bloom, “was when Prince committed every fibre of his being to music.”

In July 1984, 21 years after that defining moment in Prince’s life, *Purple Rain* shone an even brighter spotlight on Prince himself, making him a global superstar. Part concert film, part domestic drama, part autobiography, it both humanised the formerly elusive figure and made him an icon. Its success surprised many who had believed the film would sink without trace.

The previous year, when his contract with Bob Cavallo’s management team was due to expire, Prince said he’d re-sign, but on one condition. He wanted to make a movie. But that wasn’t all. “I want to *star* in the movie,” he told Cavallo — despite the lack of an idea, script, director or, indeed, any acting experience. “I want my name above the title, and I want it to be with a major studio.”

The film industry thought the idea was risible. But Prince’s disregard for convention and conservatism had got him this far and, as *Purple Rain* proved, would take him right to the top.

PRINCE’S FIFTH ALBUM, 1999, HAD BEEN A commercial breakthrough, giving him a number six US single with *Little Red Corvette* and an arena tour. Cavallo and his partners Steve Fargnoli and Joe Ruffalo were so keen to keep hold of him, they contributed some \$500,000 development funds for his movie, while Prince himself supplied another \$500,000. A further \$3 million, taken out of Prince’s already healthy music royalties, came from his label, Warner Bros. Records. Cavallo then hired William Blinn, who had created *Star Trek* & *Hutch* and was then executive-producing the *Fame* TV series, to write a first draft of the script, titled *Dreams*.

Cavallo sent it to director James Foley, who had just made



Top: Prince as The Kid. Middle: Then virtual unknown Apollonia Koterou as Apollonia. Above: The Kid stays in the picture.

Daryl Hannah drama *Reckless*, but at a screening of that film Cavallo met its editor, Albert Magnoli, and gave him the script too. Foley passed, and after reading it himself, Magnoli told Cavallo he understood why Foley had turned it down: *Dreams* was, he said, inauthentic, contrived, small and unmusical. Cavallo asked Magnoli what *he* would do. “And for whatever reason,” says Magnoli now, “I launched into a story. And in ten minutes I had told a very exuberant story about these bands coming together in Minneapolis, and a club and a concert... I was jumping up, getting excited. I surprised myself and

• KOBAL (2), PHOTOFEST (2)



I surprised Bob.”

Cavallo hired him to both write and direct. For his thesis at the University of Southern California, Magnoli had made short film *Jazz*, which married music performances to drama and won him, in 1981, a Student Academy Award. A few months before meeting Cavallo, he'd heard Prince's 1999 single and been inspired by its “call to arms and lust for life”, recognising cinematic potential in Prince's music and lyrics. So he flew to Minneapolis and pitched him the story in a restaurant. Despite having no prior knowledge of Prince's life, he struck a chord.

Apollonia, Prince and his iconic customised 1981 Honda CM400A.

Magnoli's idea had Prince's character at odds with his parents, his girlfriend and his fellow musicians. “He said, ‘Do you know me?’ I asked him what he meant. He said, ‘Do you know who I am?’ And I said, ‘No, all I heard was 1999.’ And he said, ‘Do you know anything about my life, have you ever read anything?’ I said no. And he said, ‘Then how is it in ten minutes you tell me my life story?’”

Prince had long had a fractious relationship with his father, a plastic moulder at a factory by day and a jazz pianist at night. He and Prince's mother divorced when Prince was ten, and so began a turbulent phase in Prince's life: he moved out of his mother's home after clashing with her new partner, then lived with his father, who kicked Prince out when he was 12 because, as Prince's cousin Charles Smith told biographer Alex Hahn in *Possessed: The Rise And Fall Of Prince*, he'd caught Prince in bed with a girl. Prince later recalled calling his father and begging to be allowed back. His father refused. “I sat crying at that phone booth for two hours,” he told *Rolling Stone* in 1985. Prince ended up living in his friend's basement, where he began making music in earnest.

Staggered by the parallels, Prince committed to Magnoli's vision on the spot. Magnoli spent August in Minneapolis researching the music scene, getting to know Prince and his new band, The Revolution. “I talked to Prince, learning about times when he and his father were having issues,” says Magnoli, whose plot became a fictionalised take on Prince's life. The script had Prince's character, The Kid, living in his warring parents' basement while attempting to break into the local music scene.

“The character was rooted in a reality,” insists Magnoli, “but in some cases I went further with it, like the violence.” Indeed, the film found focus in The Kid's domestic friction: the father assaults his wife and son, who continues the cycle when he hits his girlfriend. “In [Prince's] life there wasn't the violence that the film depicted. It was a mental violence. Being ignored as a child. The violence is the physical manifestation of the inner turmoil. Instead of everybody being silent and ignoring him, it explodes in this catastrophic violence and it has repercussions and consequences.” Prince's tears during these scenes, says Magnoli, were real. “I think part of the success of *Purple Rain* was that [Prince] did open up and examine himself,” The Revolution's Lisa Coleman told Alan Light for his book *Let's Go Crazy: Prince And The Making Of Purple Rain*. “I don't think he's ever done that again.”

With a script and director in place, Cavallo and Magnoli set up meetings with studios to secure more funding and distribution. The first, with Warner Bros., was disastrous. Executive Vice President Mark Canton asked them if they'd consider John Travolta playing The Kid. Magnoli said no. The executives also had concerns about the script's sexism — at one point a woman is thrown into a dumpster — and were worried that the film, with its female nudity, eroticism and swearing, would require an uncommercial R rating. Magnoli refused to compromise. It was an authentic take on what he'd found on the scene in Minneapolis, he insisted. “We left cordial, but it was tense. And it was repeated four more times at different studios.”

A week later, though, Canton called Cavallo, apologised for the negativity, and asked him and Magnoli to come back in and pitch to Warner Bros. chairmen Bob Daly and Terry Semel. They loved the pitch and greenlit it, with an eventual budget of \$7.2 million — roughly the same amount Paramount had just given *Footloose*, a surprising amount for such a risky venture. >

THE 42-DAY SHOOT BEGAN IN MINNEAPOLIS on October 31, 1983. Sub-zero temperatures and heavy snow pushed production back a few days, and during the scene in which Apollonia skinny dips in a lake, she passed out, later relating on a Minneapolis radio station that she'd suffered hypothermia. "Everything started to fade to black," she recalled, "and I just thought to myself, 'Oh no, God, I don't want to die now!... And then Prince came in. He held me, and he said, 'Please don't die...'. He saved me, with his warmth and his love and compassion."

The performances were all filmed in seven days; Prince would do only one or two takes of each song, eager to perform as if it was a real concert. In Alan Light's *Let's Go Crazy*, Prince's then-girlfriend Susannah Melvoin says the star was changing dialogue on set, "writing the script himself", although Magnoli disputes this. "I had an open-door policy. People would come in and talk to me about their scenes, so I was constantly making changes. Not once was Prince writing or dictating anything." There's no doubt Prince was uncompromising in his search for perfection and creative freedom, and Howard Bloom believes he would have directed *Purple Rain* himself if he could have: "In all probability he hired Albert because Albert could be used the way a sculptor uses a chisel."

Power struggles aside, Bloom had the utmost faith in Prince's vision and stepped in when the film became jeopardised in post-production. During the early stages of editing, Cavallo and Magnoli were summoned to a meeting, where studio marketing executives told them that research indicated *Purple Rain* would not hit big. "They said," recalls Magnoli, still exasperated today, "that the only people who were going to be interested in the movie would be 'urban' girls under the age of 14" — "urban" in this instance being a suspect euphemism for an African American audience.

A studio screening of an early cut brought further discord. "It was one of the most amazing experiences I've ever been through," says Bloom. "The emotional power was astonishing." But in the meeting that followed, all he saw were long faces. "They felt it was dead on arrival," says Bloom of the studio execs. "You could tell they were appalled by this film. One of them said, 'Let's open it in six theatres in Arizona.' And I said, 'There is no way in hell you can kill this film. It came from the gut of the performer himself, and that has never been done. And if you kill this film you are killing a piece of history.'"

Bloom's passion proved effective, and after further talks Warner Bros. agreed to release the film in 100 cinemas. The studio then arranged test screenings for audiences in California; each time, the crowd danced and screamed and laughed, says Magnoli. At one in San Diego, Bloom snuck in journalists from *Rolling Stone*, the *LA Times* and *Newsweek*, who all ran gushing early reviews. Warner Bros., still not convinced, arranged a final screening in the resolutely un-'urban' Texas, and when the film played well there, decided to release it in 1,000 cinemas.

Purple Rain came out on July 27, 1984, and knocked *Ghostbusters* off the top spot — an incredible coup. The movie went on to bag a bountiful \$68.4 million at the US box office, and was the 11th biggest release that year. It also secured Prince a number one album, a slew of hit singles, two Grammys, an Oscar (for Best Original Song), and a stadium tour.

The film's success fuelled Prince's cinematic appetite, and he went on to make two more — 1986's *Under The Cherry Moon*, and 1990's *Graffiti Bridge*. In both instances, though, he directed himself, to considerably lesser degrees of success. Compared to *Purple Rain* they lacked coherence, energy and cinematic power. They flopped. After that, Prince focused everything back on his music. He may have quit filmmaking, but he never slowed down.



Top: The Kid and Apollonia immersed in the colour scheme. Above: Prince at the 1985 Oscars with Wendy and Lisa from The Revolution. Right: The Kid and his father (Clarence Williams III) come to blows.

JUST TWO DAYS AFTER PRINCE'S DEATH, on April 23, Magnoli went to see *Purple Rain* at his local cinema in Santa Monica. "It was packed," says an emotional Magnoli. "All the shows have been sold out. It was a festive atmosphere, everybody was reciting dialogue, singing along. It was a joyous celebration of a massive talent."

In the weeks that followed, after the AMC chain had re-released it quickly, *Purple Rain* was everywhere: the film's images on magazine covers, the songs on heavy radio rotation, and the likes of Bruce Springsteen and Aretha Franklin covering the title track at gigs. That song itself



returned to the top of the US singles chart, while the album hit number two in the album chart. *Purple Rain* is, it seems, bigger than ever.

"I knew what the film's impact was," says Magnoli, "because people have come up to me over the last 30 years telling me, 'That film changed my life.' 'That film made me leave my parents.' 'That film made me change my boyfriend/girlfriend.' And seeing it in the theatre again after all these years, and seeing the energy of the audience, it threw me back to those early days when we were trying to convince the studio people that it was a crossover movie. No-one could have predicted it."

No-one, that is, except Prince. ■



BEHIND THE MUSIC

THE IMPRESSIVE — AND SURPRISING — DIRECTORS HE WORKED WITH ON HIS MUSIC VIDEOS



SPIKE LEE

MONEY DON'T MATTER 2 NIGHT (1992)

Fitting with the song's moral message, Spike Lee intercuts footage of an impoverished African-American family with archive material of 20th-century depressions, recessions, starving children, Donald Trump strutting into the Trump Taj Mahal casino, and George Bush Snr. playing golf. Prince didn't want to appear in it, and Lee never showed him a treatment.

ICE CUBE

LOVE SIGN (1994)

"I did it when I was trying to get my feet wet in directing," said Ice Cube, who made *The Players Club* four years later. "It was cool to get him to act a little bit." Cube had Prince play a DJ who stops an assassin (Nona Gaye) from killing him by making a love sign with his hand. She ends up in his bubble bath.

ANTOINE FUQUA

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL GIRL IN THE WORLD (1994)

An affectionate tribute to women, with a selection of them sitting on a couch watching their achievements on a screen while Prince performs in a red doily. Fuqua had been in Paisley Park for a day discussing ideas with Prince; the singer then phoned him at 2am, saying, "It's the boss. I'm ready to shoot now." Fuqua scrambled a crew together and shot it that night.

SALMA HAYEK

TE AMO CORAZÓN (2005)

Hayek had directed a TV movie, *The Maldonado Miracle*, in 2003, and Prince was encouraging her to direct again when he hired her for this. They filmed it in Marrakesh, where Hayek shot Prince reading a Spanish-English dictionary and playing guitar while ladies do sexy trapezing above him. Prince called Hayek "the most thoughtful, attentive director I have ever worked with".

GEORGE MILLER

THE SONG OF THE HEART (2006)

Prince wrote *The Song Of The Heart* for Miller's *Happy Feet*, and the video is a montage of moments from the film. Miller initially approached Prince to get his permission to have Hugh Jackman and Nicole Kidman sing *Kiss* in the film, then asked Prince for a new song, which the singer agreed to do after watching it at Paisley Park.

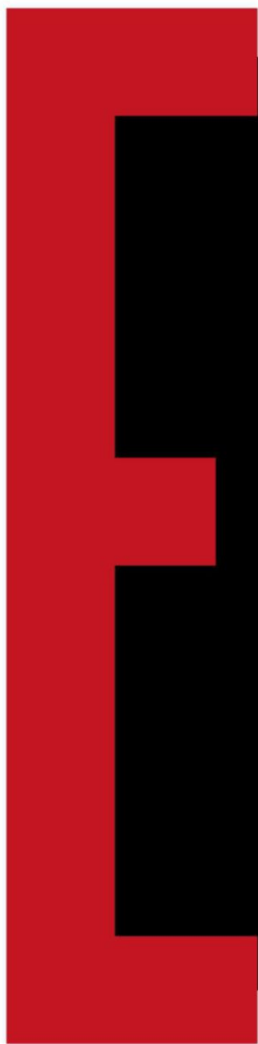
THE **EMPIRE** INTERVIEW

Blow By Blow

With *Born To Be Blue*, **Ethan Hawke** finally got the chance to play jazz legend Chet Baker. But don't expect a rise-to-fame story — as he says, “We all become a lot more interesting when we're failing...”

WORDS LIZ BEARDSWORTH PORTRAITS DIEGO UCHITEL





Ethan Hawke blows
his own horn in
Born To Be Blue.

ETHAN HAWKE CAME CLOSE TO playing Chet Baker 16 years ago. He'd been hooked on the influential jazz trumpeter's music since high school, and when his friend and regular collaborator Richard Linklater suggested they give him the biopic treatment together, he naturally jumped at the chance. That it never in the end came together has, all these years later, proved to be a blessing in disguise.

In *Born To Be Blue*, Hawke portrays the 'James Dean of jazz' at a later, more fragile stage in his life, when he suffered both from heroin addiction and losing his teeth in an assault. It's earned the 45-year-old actor rave reviews. ("Everything that makes Ethan Hawke an extraordinary actor... is on view in *Born To Be Blue*," wrote Peter Travers in *Rolling Stone*.) While Hawke modestly shrugs off the compliments — "It's just more of a showy performance than I usually give," he tells *Empire* — he admits to drawing on what he feels are parallels between himself and Baker. "There's a lot about this performance that is really personal to me. One is losing several close friends and peers to heroin, and the other is that navigating your way through early success is very difficult."

Hawke first appeared on screen in 1985 sci-fi adventure *Explorers* — alongside River Phoenix, a close friend he would lose eight years later to a drug-induced cardiac arrest. His breakthrough came with *Dead Poets Society* in 1989, but the success of that film came at a cost for Hawke, who found himself struggling to improve on that performance. Still, in the end it didn't harm him. He's worked steadily since, whether on stage (checking off Chekhov, Brecht and

Shakespeare) or on screen, where, despite being pegged as a slacker Generation X icon through films like *Reality Bites* and *Before Sunrise*, his work rate only seems to be increasing. Hawke's crammed no fewer than 13 movies into the past two years, including *Boyhood* (for which he received his fourth Oscar nomination), his third feature as director (documentary *Seymour: An Introduction*), and upcoming mega-Western *The Magnificent Seven*.

On top of all that, his first graphic novel, *Indeh*, will be published on June 7 ("It's about the life of Geronimo"), and he's considering movie number four as director: "It's supposed to be a secret, but I've been working on an adaptation of Tennessee Williams' *Camino Real*."

Today, though, on a crisp May afternoon at his home in Brooklyn, *Empire* finds Hawke in a relaxed mood, looking forward to catching up with *Game Of Thrones* ("It's awesome. They're doing a great job") and "playing soccer with my son". But not before sharing his passion for the musician with whom he clearly empathizes deeply.

Reviewers are describing your performance in *Born To Be Blue* as a career-best. Does that matter to you?

I appreciate the compliment. Don't get me wrong, I really like being complimented — more than I should — but I also know that the opportunity to explore a character so fully is rare. The event of most movies is the plot; the event of *Born To Be Blue* is slight character alterations that happen to a person. So there's a lot of energy being pushed towards the performance, which is why I think people say that kind of thing.

FOOTNOTES

① Linklater and Hawke workshopped and scripted a treatment about Baker in the early 2000s, which Hawke has described as "dangerous and weird".



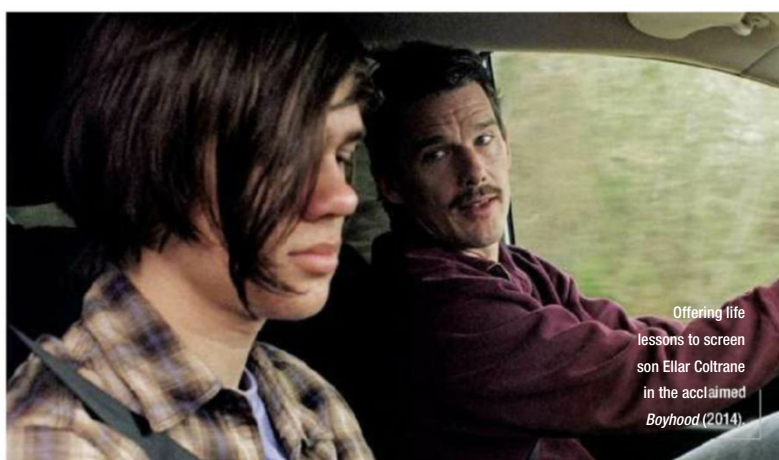
Hawke with Robin Williams in 1989's *Dead Poets Society*, the young actor's breakout film.



With Greta Gerwig in "intelligent screwball comedy" *Maggie's Plan*.



Hawke, Vincent D'Onofrio, Skeet Ulrich and Dwight Yoakam in 1998's *The Newton Boys*.



Offering life lessons to screen son Ellar Coltrane in the acclaimed *Boyhood* (2014).

Wasn't there talk of you playing Chet Baker years ago, for a film with Richard Linklater?

Yeah. I've been passionate about Chet for years. Around the time I was 30, we developed a project about early '50s Chet Baker ❶. So *Born To Be Blue* felt like I was being offered the sequel to a film I never got to make, you know? But playing Chet in his forties is actually much more interesting for the actor. Like every rise-to-fame story, people are not that interesting when they're getting what they want. We all become a lot more interesting when we're failing.

Are you a jazz fan, or is it just Chet Baker who interests you?

Strangely I *became* a jazz fan through Chet Baker. When I was graduating high school, it was right around the time Bruce Weber's *Let's Get Lost* came out, and I was kind of hypnotised by Chet Baker, what a ghost of a person he was. Around the same time I saw Forest Whitaker's performance in *Bird* and saw *Thelonious Monk: Straight, No Chaser* and *Round Midnight*. Those movies were my introduction to jazz. And with Chet, the way he plays the trumpet is different from hundreds of thousands of other people who play the trumpet. He doesn't put any lies in his music. It's very open, and very simple — never trying to impress.

Did you learn to play the trumpet for the role?

What happened is kind of a funny story. I've played guitar my whole life and I've goofed around with the trumpet and various instruments, so I felt I'd be able to do it. But when I first started taking lessons I was incredibly discouraged about how difficult

FOOTNOTES

❶ Embouchure is the use of facial muscles and the shaping of the lips to grip the mouthpiece of woodwind or brass instruments.

❷ *Dead Poets Society* lost out at the 1990 Academy Awards to Bruce Beresford's *Driving Miss Daisy*.

it was, and begged the director (*Robert Budreau*) if he could put filming off to let me practise for a year. And I came back to my trumpet teacher and said, "Look, I've just asked him for a year," and he said, "If you had eight years, you wouldn't be anywhere near ready." (*Laughs*) So what I did was I learned about six to eight songs as well as I could, and I played them badly, but at least I learned the fingering and the embouchure. ❸ I'd give myself the *sensation* I was playing well (*laughs*).

Have you seen Don Cheadle's Miles Davis movie, *Miles Ahead*?

(*Laughs*) I've worked with Don (in *Antoine Fuqua's 2009 cop drama Brooklyn's Finest*) and I think he's fantastic. I hope people do a double feature of our movies. What I think is so funny is that in Chet's movie, Miles Davis makes a large appearance, and in Miles' movie, Chet Baker's name's not mentioned! That's really perfect, you know? (*Laughs*) That's as it should be. Miles was a genius. And Chet is a very interesting man and a beautiful musician, but he wasn't a music revolutionary.

Born To Be Blue deals with how early success affects people. You were really young when you made it big. Did that feed into your performance?

Yes. We all like to feel our lives are building, so it's a difficult thing when you have success too young because it throws the rhythm off. For example, [I was] 17 in *Dead Poets Society*. It was nominated for Best Picture ❹ and people are moved by it, and write you letters about it, and it kind of leaves you nowhere to go. (*Laughs*) You start thinking, "Oh, my next movie will be >

better,” and it *isn't*. It throws off the normal trajectory and I think it makes it really hard for people to grow in the way our culture generally supports. I know it was challenging for me.

How did you cope when others didn't?

I don't know. I don't know. I think for some reason, particularly after River's death, I had a really healthy disenchantment with the value and power of celebrity. I never equated it with any real purposeful, meaningful success. It's one of the things I really like about *Born To Be Blue*: it works towards a moment where a person is having an incredible professional triumph while simultaneously having a personal failure. We like to think that they're all combined, when oftentimes when people are outwardly failing they're inwardly growing, and the reverse.

You just mentioned *Dead Poets Society*. What do you remember about standing on the desk, addressing Robin Williams with, “Oh captain! My captain!”?

I remember so much, I don't exactly know how to begin. That whole experience, of watching Robin and Peter (*Weir*) work... The word “genius” is often over-used, but Robin was truly a comic genius. His brain didn't work like other people's. And it was really exciting to be around a fully mature artist like that. And then Peter Weir, who is such a serious person, and full of so much love. I don't think I understood at the time what a huge psychological, electrical jolt to my brain that movie was. Its message has kind of been tattooed on my chest my whole life. But it's only since Robin's passing that I realised what a big effect the psychology of that movie had on me.

The notion of “carpe diem”?

Yeah, “Gather ye rosebuds while ye may...” All that stuff. “I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.” All that. There are a lot of powerful ideas in that movie. It was exciting for a 17 year-old brain to be near.

With that and then *Reality Bites* five years later, you were touted as a ‘Generation X’ icon. Did you enjoy that?

I don't know. I struggled with those kinds of labels at the time. Now I find them fun. I remember when I was doing *Before Sunrise*, I was the poster boy for Gen X. Linklater was the director of *Slacker*, you know? We were working together, going to R.E.M. concerts (*laughs*)... Oftentimes labels are used to make things smaller, but the truth is, one of the great pleasures of my life has been working with my own generation, whether it's Antoine Fuqua or Richard Linklater or Andrew Niccol, who wrote and directed *Gattaca* and *Lord Of War* and *Good Kill*. Guys of my generation have helped me find a voice and it's been exciting to be a part of that.

The *Before* films’ Julie Delpy is also one of your contemporaries. What were your first impressions of her?

Well, meeting Julie Delpy is like meeting a character from a Victor Hugo novel. She was bigger than life. The smartest, most beautiful, most passionate, wildest creature I'd ever encountered. At 23 or whatever, she'd already worked with Godard, she'd already worked with Kieślowski... ❶ She was literally one of the most beautiful people I'd ever encountered. She had a ferocious intellect and (*laughs*) she was wildly intimidating.

Are you still intimidated by her?

Um, no, now I love her. It's different. (*Laughs*) She certainly can be intimidating if she wants to be. She's still wild as they come.



“*Dead Poets Society* was a huge jolt to my brain.”

No-one expected a follow-up to *Before Sunrise*, but nine years later you made *Before Sunset*. Was it envisaged at the time as a middle part?

You know, the question imagines a grander plan than we've ever had. We weren't sure. A couple of years after we'd finished *Before Sunrise* we met and we worked on *Waking Life* ❷ together, and we had a ball doing that, so it seemed kind of obvious when that was over that we should collaborate again. It always occurred to me it would be a fun thing to revisit, but at the time, *Before Sunrise* was probably the lowest-grossing movie in history to



Celine (Julie Delpy) and Jesse (Hawke) connect in 1995's *Before Sunrise*.



And 18 years later, in 2013's bittersweet *Before Midnight*.

have a sequel (*laughs*). We cared more about that movie than anyone else did. And when we finished the second one I felt very strongly that we needed a third one; that as beautiful as the ending to *Before Sunset* is, it's a call that begs for an answer.

And what was that answer? Some fans of the series found *Before Midnight* a difficult watch. That huge fight...

I'm more proud of that scene than any other single thing I've been a part of. The first two films are all about romantic projection, and we had this idea for the third film to really try to explore what happens when you get everything you want. There are a lot of movies about break-ups, and a lot of movies about people falling in love, but very few made about a couple who've been together ten years. It was something really interesting to me, to visit people in the middle of their lives, who still believe in their craving for love, but they're not kids anymore, and life can't be about what *might* be, it has to be about what *is* happening. That's much deeper water to swim in.

Are their plans for another instalment?

You never know. There is this symmetry to these three, there's something beautiful about the way the third one ends with the couple fighting, and the first one begins with the couple in their forties fighting. There's something about it that feels done. That doesn't mean that there isn't a new beginning, a new chapter...

And then there's your other big project with Linklater, *Boyhood*. How far did your relationship with your own father influence your performance in that film?

A tremendous amount. One of the reasons Rick and I became such good friends was we had a similar background — both from Texas, both children of divorce, our fathers are very similar. I think Rick cast me because he knew the subject matter, coping with divorce, was very interesting to me. I'd experienced it from two vantage points, as a child and as a parent ¹, and that was something I could help him with. I remember when we first talked about it we had this idea of trying to imagine what your father looked like to you at the age of six, and then at your high-school graduation, and if you

FOOTNOTES

¹ Delpy was 14 when Jean-Luc Godard discovered her in 1984. He cast her in *Détective* (1985). In 1993, Krzysztof Kieślowski cast her as the lead in *Three Colours White*.

² *Waking Life* is Linklater's 2001 animated drama-documentary curio. Hawke and Delpy reprise *Before Sunrise*'s Jesse and Celine, who lie in bed discussing death and consciousness.

³ Hawke has four children: daughter Maya (17) and son Levon (14) with ex-wife Uma Thurman, and daughters Clementine (seven) and Indiana (four) with second wife Ryan Shawhughes.

could dramatise how that change happened. It's so obvious how kids are growing, but as adults we're maturing and changing all the time, too. And to try to tell that story, in the background of this other story, would be a unique challenge.

One of Linklater's films that tends to be overlooked is his 1998 crime Western *The Newton Boys*.

I had that poster on my wall. It had a badass campaign but people didn't really understand it. But we had a lot of fun making it. I became really great friends with Vincent D'Onofrio on that movie, and it was where my relationship with Linklater went to a different level. I look back with real nostalgia now. People wanted that movie to be *Young Guns*, but one of the things I love about Linklater is that while he made a movie about the biggest bank robbers in US history, the only reason they ended up famous was because they didn't kill anybody.

Vincent D'Onofrio's also in *The Magnificent Seven*. How was it working with him again?

It was fun to be back on a horse with Vincent. *The Magnificent Seven* is a full-blown hundred-million-dollar action movie. I've seen it and can be one of the first to report that it's a phenomenal movie. It's about as much fun as a movie should be allowed to be. Antoine (*Fuqua*) has a love of the Western genre, it kind of seeps out of him. I think he is our generation's Sam Peckinpah. And to be among people that you admire, riding horses through the desert, I'd just never laughed so hard in my life. Chris Pratt's the real thing. He's going to be around a *long* time. But it was a very different experience, because *The Newton Boys*, while probably the biggest budget of Rick's career, was still an independently made movie; *Magnificent Seven* was the biggest studio movie I've ever been involved with. Lots of horses, lots of guns, lots of explosions, lots of danger.

So who was the best horseman?

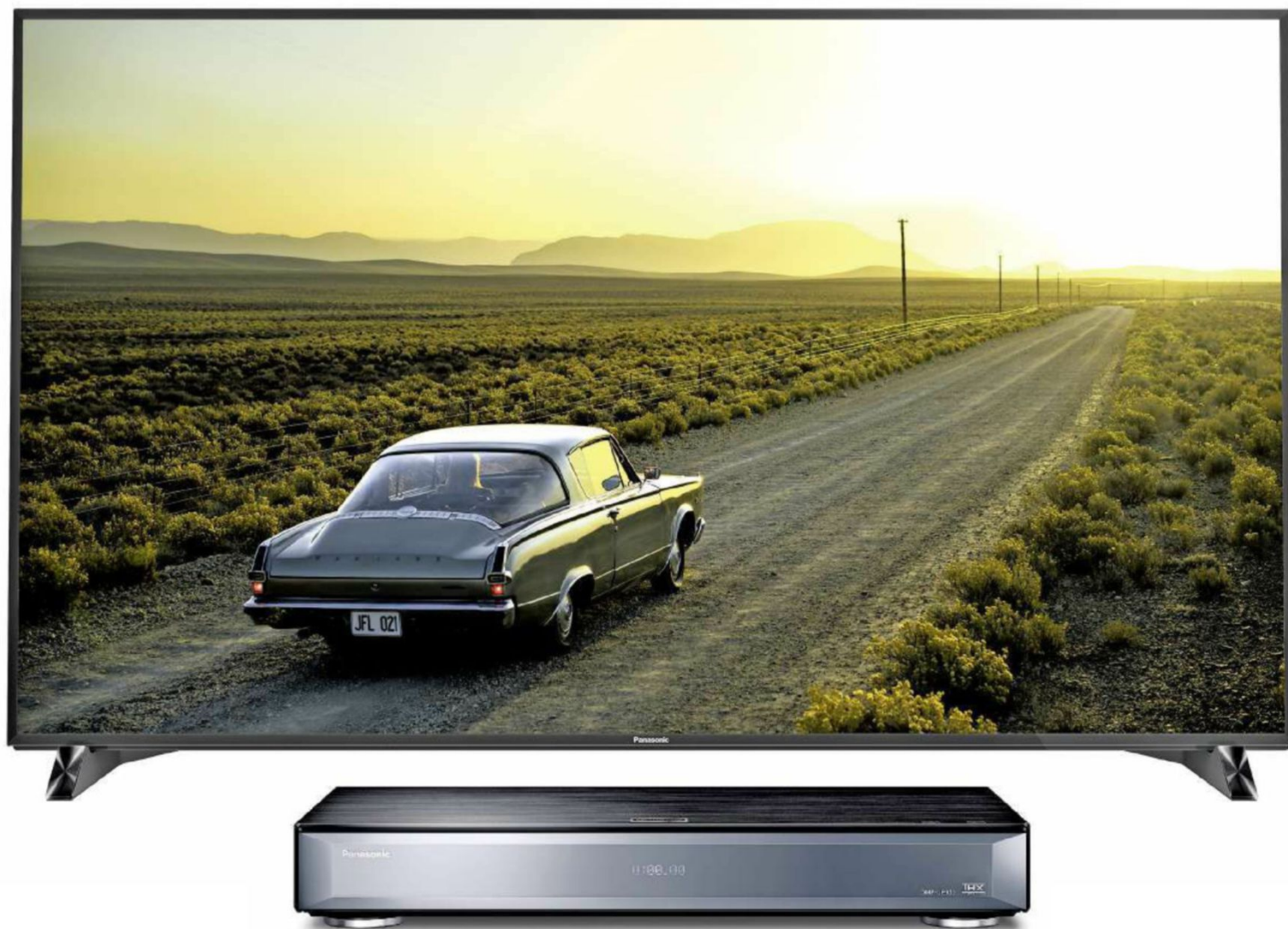
God! Good question. (*Thinks*) It might have been D'Onofrio. We were all pretty even though. Nobody was bad, everybody was good. But the stuntmen would ride circles around us.

Aside from *Born To Be Blue*, you have another film out next month, romantic comedy *Maggie's Plan*. Why are you so rarely in romcoms? Or comedies generally?

I don't know why. I certainly haven't gotten to do many comedies, but when I first started acting, it was something I thought I'd do a lot of. In truth, one of my dreams would be to co-star with those guys on *Talladega Nights 2* or something. I would love the challenge of that. And I always loved the Warren Beatty comedies when I was younger, you know, *Shampoo*, and a couple of the early John Cusack comedies. That was the kind of comedy I thought I would do, rooted in character. But one of the things I like most about *Maggie's Plan* is it's an intelligent comedy. In the past there used to be a lot of them but it's a genre that's gone missing. Woody Allen is kind of the only person who's [making] comedies for people who don't just want fart jokes. It's not that there's anything wrong with a good fart joke, it's just that it's fun to see an intelligent screwball comedy, and that's the fun of *Maggie's Plan*.

It's funny you mention Woody Allen — you've lived in New York for most of your life, so it's kind of strange you've not been in one of his films. Would you like to work with him? Yes! Write him a letter, tell him to cast me, for crying out loud. ■

BORN TO BE BLUE IS OUT IN JULY, AND MAGGIE'S PLAN IS OUT ON JULY 8. BOTH WILL BE REVIEWED IN THE NEXT ISSUE.



TRUE TO THE DIRECTOR'S VISION

HOW THE NEW 4K SCREENS ARE
GIVING US CLEARER, SHARPER
IMAGES THAN EVER BEFORE



EMPIRE IS SITTING in a darkened room in Soho watching the opening sequences of *Mad Max: Fury Road* and not quite believing our eyes. It's a film

we've seen and loved before, but not like this. The power of George Miller's dystopian imagery has been transformed. You can see every ripple on the surface of the tyre and veils of dust hovering in the air. Sunlight bounces off a metallic surface with almost blinding intensity. As Furiosa climbs into the War Rig, all the dials on the dashboard are completely legible.

The screen in question is Panasonic's 65" 4K HDR DX902 television, their flagship screen for 2016, and a thing of beauty. Connected to a UB900 Ultra HD Blu-ray player, in which the 4K disc of

Fury Road spins, the results are frankly peerless. This is a new screen technology aimed specifically at film lovers.

"You are instantly absorbed in the images," enthuses Dado Valentic, the award-winning colour grading artist who worked with Vanja Cernjul on Panasonic's short movie *Converging Beams*, the basis of the ad you may have seen at the cinema or on TV. "It is not simply about sharpening the image, it's about a higher emotional connection."

Grading isn't a technical process — it is an art. Scene by scene, shot by shot, experts like Valentic manually pick which colours to boost or where to deepen the contrast. They are like archaeologists of light, discovering details you never knew were there. The goal is complete immersion. To make what we see on a television exactly what George Miller saw when he first looked through his viewfinder.

It has been a revolution on three levels. Firstly, resolution — how many pixels they have on a screen. The more pixels you have, the clearer the image becomes. And 4K televisions have four times the resolution of HD.

Secondly, it's about colour. "We see much more colour with our eyes than televisions are able to portray," says Valentic. They have vastly extended the range of possible colours, pushing what he calls the "colour gamut".

Finally, it's about contrast. "This is not about attaining maximum brightness," insists Valentic, "but how to get a screen to display a dynamic range of light and dark." This is where Panasonic's 4K HDR (High Dynamic Range) technology comes into its own, creating sparkling highlights and wells of bottomless black with a dynamic gradient between them. Images take on extraordinary depth without 3D.

All the big studios have signed up to release films in 4K. Warner Bros. alone has committed to 35 releases. Meanwhile, Netflix and Amazon are streaming all their new productions in 4K, giving it a much wider reach. Older titles will need colour-grading artists like Valentic to go back to the original material and create a new master, so may take more time. Still, there is no doubt *Empire* is witnessing the future of home entertainment.

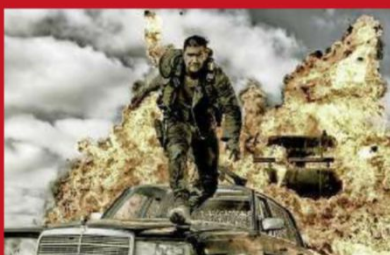
"Nothing will ever replace cinema for the experience," says Valentic, "but we are getting better results on television screens."

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MAD MAX: FURY ROAD

George Miller's return to his dystopian franchise was already an action masterpiece. In 4K, its auto-carnage will become the most visceral experience you can have without shaving your head and sharing a bunk bed with the Doof Warrior.



THE REVENANT

Leonardo DiCaprio and director Alejandro González Iñárritu went to Oscar-winning lengths to recreate crossing the Rockies in nothing but a bear pelt and a bad mood. The landscapes will be stunning — 4K horse intestines more of a challenge.



KINGSMAN: THE SECRET SERVICE

The classic spy genre was turned on its head in Matthew Vaughn's audacious spin on *My Fair Lady*. Now you can revel in the lovely stitching on a Kingsman's bespoke suit and the bloody carnage meted out to those that have it coming.



DEADPOOL

On a different note, the wisecracking, frequently slow-motion ultraviolent hi-jinks of Ryan Reynolds' anti-superhero are all the more attention-grabbing in pin-sharp 4K. NB: the bad language and dirty jokes don't get any cleaner...



HOUSE OF CARDS

With Netflix committed to streaming in 4K, top TV series will also feel the benefit of greater resolution and depth. Which is good news, because at least 44 of Kevin Spacey's Machiavellian facial expressions aren't detectable in standard HD.

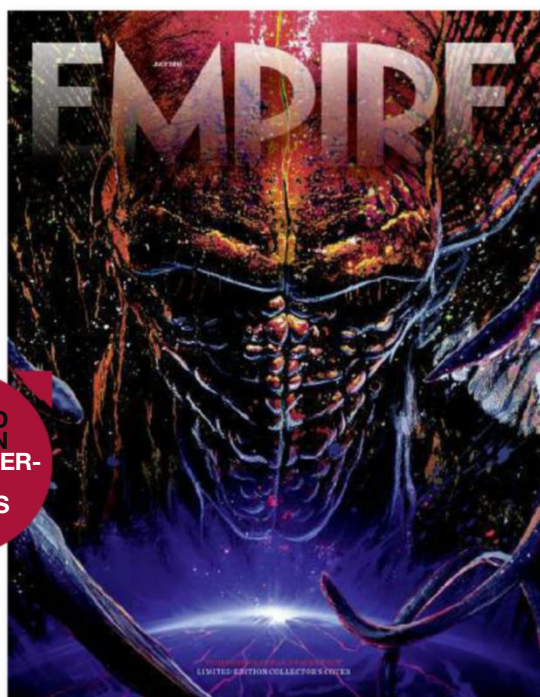


MARCO POLO

Netflix's historical epic about the Venetian explorer was shot and mastered in full 4K glory by cinematographer Vanja Cernjul and colour grading artist Dado Valentic, whose skills are also on show in Panasonic's breathtaking short film *Converging Beams*.

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REVIEW

MAY 26 – JUNE 29, 2016 | EDITED by NICK DE SEMLYEN



NEW RELEASE

CREED

Seconds out, round seven! Ryan Coogler takes us behind the scenes of his entry in the *Rocky* franchise. (p.130)

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Bone Tomahawk

★★★★★

FROM JUNE 13 / CERT. 18

DVD BR

THE WILD BUNCH



EVENGE IS A DISH best served hot, or at least lightly roasted, for the villains in first-time director S. Craig Zahler's delightfully grisly Western — a tribe of cannibals who kidnap folk, scalp them alive, snap their limbs like wishbones and then chow down on the bloody remains. That's the fate facing any frontiersman who wanders into their burial ground. These cave-dwellers are truly from

a most unusual stock — “inbred animals who rape and eat their own mothers”, we're informed.

Certainly, their meal preparation is gruesome and they blind and hobble their womenfolk. But don't be fooled. For all the horror tags, this is not a film defined by schlock and gore. It starts with a throat-slicing, but the bloodletting doesn't begin in earnest until the climax. Up until then, *Bone Tomahawk* plays as a dialogue-rich, old-timey Western, focused on four townsmen bickering their way across a forbidding landscape to rescue their kidnapped brethren.

And what a motley, brilliantly cast crew they are. The group is led by a heavily whiskered Kurt Russell, the sort of sage, unemotional sheriff who might front a John Ford movie. Also on board are his likable, white-bearded deputy (Richard Jenkins), and a neatly moustached and smart-alecky gunslinger (Matthew Fox) who, like John Wayne in *The*

Above: Richard Jenkins and Kurt Russell regret taking the law into their own hands. **Below:** Don't mess with Sid Haig when he's hungry...

Searchers, is driven by disdain for Native Americans. The group's rounded out by a clean-shaven gent whose wife's been abducted (Patrick Wilson).

The foursome's interplay is the fish in Zahler's chowder, and their sharp turns of phrase — “Mr. Brooder just educated two Mexicans on the meaning of manifest destiny” — make for fine dining. The cinematography adds extra flavour with its stark depiction of a primeval land. Some, however, might find the film's chatty middle too flabby.

But when that battle arrives, it doesn't disappoint. The baddies are terrifying, and the final showdown, featuring an interesting use of a hip flask, is taut and inventive.

Sadly, the extras here are ordinary, with two on-stage Q+As and a featurette made from generic junket interviews. Still, the main event more than compensates. Shot on a tiny budget in just 21 days, *Bone Tomahawk* is as piercing, and as pitiless, as its name suggests. **WILL LAWRENCE**



ALSO OUT



Pride + Prejudice + Zombies

★★★

FROM JUNE 27 / CERT. 15



→ Mixing Austen with entrails, this adaptation of the Seth Grahame-Smith novel fails to muster much in the way of either laughs or scares. The cast is so strong, especially Lily James and Matt Smith, that you'll wish they were in a straight-up corset drama instead of a misfiring mash-up. **WT**



Trumbo

★★★

FROM MAY 30 / CERT. 12



→ The era of the Hollywood Blacklist was a complicated time. Not that you'd know it from this. The story of banned screenwriter Dalton Trumbo, it firmly positions him as the hero, with the anti-Communists as 2D bad guys. It's passable entertainment, but relies on Bryan Cranston's performance to elevate it from its simplified politics. **JP**



By the Sea

★★★

FROM JUNE 20 / CERT. 15



→ Angelina Jolie not only wrote and directed this chilly drama, but stars in it as a despondent ex-dancer opposite real-life husband (Brad Pitt). Sadly, it's a self-indulgent, largely unconvincing effort that apes Antonioni but lacks his insight. The cinematography is stunning, at least: moping about has rarely looked so good. **ES**



Goosebumps

★★★★★

FROM MAY 30 / CERT. PG



AMERICAN HORROR STORY



HIS WAS NOT A hugely anticipated film, even for those who have grown up on R. L. Stine's teen-horror books, but it was one of this year's

best surprises. Like *The LEGO Movie*, it takes pucky delight in mining nostalgia, and shows no compunction in throwing all the greatest hits at the screen at once — in this case, the monsters of 62 novels. Those include a psychic flying poodle and killer lawn gnomes, catnip for fans and a pleasantly bizarre experience for the rest of us.

The story sees teenager Zach (Dylan Minnette) and his mother Gale (Amy Ryan) move to a new town after a family tragedy. Zach befriends Hannah (Odeya Rush), the mysterious girl next door, until her hostile father R. L. Stine (Jack Black) orders him to stay away. Zach's attempts to find out what's going on reveal Stine's secret: his monsters are real, and are trapped in his books.



Top: Jack Black auditions the teens for *School Of Rock 2*. **Above:** The monsters are ready to mash up the town.

Long story short, they all get loose and wreak havoc on the small town, in a reign of terror led by ventriloquist's dummy Slappy (also voiced by Black). Besides the gnomes, there's a giant preying mantis, a yeti, aliens, zombies and werewolves to escape as our mismatched heroes try to figure out how to save the town, building to a showdown at the local high school's big dance. But amid the ridiculous creatures and some genuine (though child-friendly) scares, the film makes us care about the characters, from the faintly tragic Hannah to Black's misunderstood Stine.

It's witty and knowing, with an admirable commitment to weirdness, but it's that underlying sincerity that recalls the best of Amblin's '80s output and makes it fit to sit on a shelf alongside *The Goonies* or *Gremlins*. **HELEN O'HARA**



THE PEOPLE V O.J. SIMPSON: AMERICAN CRIME STORY

★★★★★

FROM NOW / CERT. 15



TRIAL OF THE CENTURY



glove doesn't fit, you must acquit," catchphrase to the shock verdict, it was overcooked, hysterical stuff — as was its media coverage. Yet from such sensational material showrunners Scott Alexander and Larry Karaszewski have crafted a remarkably nuanced drama, a series with a huge amount to say about today, as well as Los Angeles in the mid-1990s. Here's a case that might explain why celebrities seem to get away with, well, murder; here's an origin story for reality TV as a whole and its most notorious clan in particular; here's a precursor to

SUBJECTS FOR drama go, the trial of O. J. Simpson suffers one huge drawback: it's flatly unbelievable. From the Bronco chase to the, "If the

the racism and unrest that has emerged again in the US in recent years.

As most people over the age of about 25 will know, in 1994, NFL star-turned-actor Simpson (Cuba Gooding Jr.) was arrested for the murder of his ex-wife, Nicole Brown Simpson, and her friend, Ronald Goldman. Prosecutor Marcia Clark (Sarah Paulson) thought she had an open-and-shut case that would bring glory to the District Attorney's office. But then O. J.'s legal 'dream team' took shape, among them his friend Robert Kardashian (David Schwimmer), celebrity specialist Robert Shapiro (John Travolta), showman crusader Johnnie Cochran (Courtney B. Vance) and criminal defence legend F. Lee Bailey (Nathan Lane).

What follows is a masterclass in how justice can be bamboozled by human failings. The passionate Clark — struggling



O. J. Simpson (Cuba Gooding Jr., centre) flanked by key members of his 'dream team'.



"If it doesn't fit..." Prosecutor Chris Darden (Sterling K. Brown) eyes Simpson as he tries on the infamous gloves.

with her own child custody battle — finds herself outgunned and outmanoeuvred, as key witnesses prove unreliable under the glare of media pressure and the jury is swayed by emotional appeals. Her only reliable ally is her sympathetic co-counsel Christopher Darden (Sterling K. Brown), a standout in a cast of standouts and one of the few clear-eyed characters caught in the trial.

It's the addition of the crusading Cochrane to Simpson's team that really derails Clark's process. A man determined to use the trial's huge media profile to further his cause, Cochrane has his eye on wider injustices when he takes on the Simpson case, which makes his efforts somewhat contradictory. He's so keen to convict the LAPD following the outrage of their acquittal in the Rodney King trial two years earlier that he serves justice poorly in the lengths to which he goes to secure Simpson's freedom. Did the bigger issues of race and police corruption obscure the fates of Nicole and Ronald? Every scene involving the angry, unreliable Simpson suggests they may have done — and Vance's alternately subtle and showboating performance suggests that Cochrane knew it.

For all the flashiness of its crash-zooms and split-screens, this is a drama that's been mapped out with great care. It's calibrated to entertain those who studiously followed the case as well as oblivious newcomers. The early episodes draw you in with the farce of Simpson's pre-arrest behaviour, via the permanently worried expression of Schwimmer's Kardashian and the background role of his soon-to-be-famous kids, but the show grows more focused and sombre with each scene, building towards its moving finale.

It doesn't hit you over the head with its messages; it doesn't have to. The characters are hyper-aware of every nuance of their decisions; any wider meaning flows organically from their conversations. The only person who seems unaware of the deeper issues is O. J. himself — perhaps understandably given he stands at the eye of the storm, but perhaps, too, because his interior life remains shadowy and dark.

But if the subtext provides lasting food for thought, the show's most obvious gift is its ensemble. It's a combination of great cast and powerful material that, like *Hamilton* on Broadway, has the potential to change the way you see history, and provide a window onto our own world. How did O. J. get off, and what does it say about us that it's easy to imagine it happening again? **HELEN O'HARA**

ALSO OUT



The X-Files: Event Series

★★

FROM JUNE 13 / CERT. TBC



→ Like an ageing band on a reunion tour, *The X-Files*' encore is more appealing in concept than reality. This six-part 'event series' aims for every classic beat (mythology episode, freak-of-the-week, quirky comedy), but uneven plotting and the introduction of Mulder and Scully's doppelgängers make this a file that should have remained closed. **JD**



The Leftovers: Season 2

★★★★

FROM NOW / CERT. TBC



→ Breaking from the confines of Tom Perrotta's source novel, this season is an invigorating change from all the previous moping about. A central mystery acts as a hub for the character stories, each of which covers more narrative ground than year one's entire run. No longer a glum meditation on loss, this is now one of the boldest dramas currently on air. **JD**



The Knick: Season 2

★★★★

FROM NOW / CERT. 18



→ Set in 1901, the second helping of Steven Soderbergh's gripping drama sees drug-addled surgeon John Thackery (Clive Owen) push the boundaries of medical science, and his own septum, in bold new directions. *Selma*'s André Holland is joint MVP as a rival pioneer. Much blood is spilt along the way, not all of it in hospital. **PDS**



Hail, Caesar!

★★★★★

FROM JULY 11 / CERT. 12

DVD BR 4A

VENI, VIDI, CLOONEY



T'S ALL GEORGE Clooney's fault. As he regales us proudly in one of four Coen-light featurettes, he kept blabbing at press conferences that *Hail, Caesar!* was to be the brothers' next film, only to mess with their heads. So they eventually just wrote the damn thing, and the A-listers couldn't stay away. "Unless you are a complete moron, you say yes," says Channing Tatum of the offer to join the Coen circus, unperturbed that he was cast as a complete moron: Gene Kelly-like hoofer Burt Gurney.

An offbeat love song to the Golden Age of movies, located in a bustling 1950s Hollywood studio, it comes complete with a quota of magnificent pastiches on long-scuttled genres such as aquamusicals and Biblical epics wherein Clooney meets Christ. It's leisurely for a farce, and non-committal about suspense: the genre is anyone's guess.

Structurally speaking, it's a smorgasbord of subplots, a couple of days' worth of trouble-shooting for Josh Brolin's likable Eddie Mannix, skulking about the backlot like a shamus. He's head honcho at Capitol Pictures, where Barton Fink once wrestled with a wrestling picture. If you're into motifs, Mannix plays Jesus to these fallen movie stars, checking in like clockwork with Capitol's unseen Godhead, Mr. Skank.

This is not the Coens at their edgiest, or most pungently weird. There is none of that thrilling collision between good and evil, and all denominations of idiot between.

Above: "Nitwit": George Clooney as Hollywood star Baird Whitlock. **Below:** Hello, sailor! Channing Tatum's stripping days proved useful.

You half wonder whether the unflustered style is a riposte to the feisty violence of *Fargo*, the TV show made in their honour. Instead, *Hail, Caesar!* is elegantly laidback, heartfelt in its survey of Hollywood then and now. Tatum's tap routine, an homage to old-school homoeroticism, is so perfectly done it feels uncanny. The arrival of a Soviet sub off the coast of Malibu, featuring a surprising appearance by Dolph Lundgren, looks like it was shot on a soundstage (which it was). Even the real world feels like a movie (which it is).

The message is that seeking a message is futile. Politics and faith prove fakers in the face of honest-to-God moviemaking. The Commies who kidnap Clooney's matinée nitwit turn out to be a cabal of Finkish screenwriters, hankering after a fair share of the dough. *Hail, Caesar!* may resemble a fluffy farce, but what with the squabbling fussbudgets, bad hair, bungled kidnappings and Frances McDormand cameo, there's little doubt this is a genuine Coen joint. **IAN NATHAN**



ALSO OUT



Concussion

★★

FROM JUNE 6 / CERT. 15



→ A one-man-against-the-system whistleblower movie with Will Smith as coroner Dr. Bennet Omalu, who noted the blows to the head sustained by American football players cause lasting damage. It has a solid dramatic thread and good support (Albert Brooks, David Morse), but is protracted and overplays syrupy patriotism. **KN**



Youth

★★★

FROM NOW / CERT. 15



→ Paolo Sorrentino follows up *The Great Beauty* with this enjoyable oddity, in which Michael Caine (still got it) and Harvey Keitel (atoning for those Direct Line ads) play two ageing artistic types taking time out at an Alpine retreat. The two leads are great, and Jane Fonda sizzles in a brief cameo, but there's not much going on under the surface. **CH**



Dad's Army

★★

FROM NOW / CERT. PG



→ A likable cast give it their all, but this respectful redo of the classic TV sitcom is a pale Xerox of the original. While Toby Jones deserves plaudits for reinventing the priggish Captain Mainwaring in the face of much slapstick involving bulls and rotating blackboards, the jokes are more hit and miss than a rusty Home Guard rifle. **WT**



Victoria

★★★★★

FROM NOW / CERT. 15



BERLIN FALL



IN 1955, JULES Dassin made *Rififi*, a film about a heist that is silent for an entire quarter of its runtime. *Victoria* is, in several ways, its spiritual successor. It's another low-budget European production that sees a gang attempt a spot of larceny, made with similarly thrilling technical virtuosity. Following a café worker (Laia Costa) who gets mixed up with a group of petty criminals late one crazy Berlin night and is drafted in — perfectly happily, as it goes — as their getaway driver, remarkably the entire thing was filmed as one continuous, 138-minute shot. As the camera snakes around dancefloors, settles in the back seat of cars and climbs staircases with the heroine, the tension keeps cranking up and up and up.

Yet audacious though this is, it never feels like a gimmick. In fact, it's easy to forget you're experiencing what's known in the business as a 'oner', a testament to DP Sturla Brandth Grøvlen's extraordinary work. It's a feat acknowledged by director Sebastian Schipper, who gave him top billing when it came to crew — even above himself.



Top: Nail-biting adventures for Laia Costa's Victoria. **Above:** For their second date they'd probably just do bowling and Pizza Hut.

Credit is also due to the unknown cast, who spent time together beforehand, building a rapport. Before the crime plot kicks in, their interplay onscreen is warm and natural; it feels like a hangout movie in the vein of *Clerks* or Richard Linklater's *Before* series. The interplay between Victoria and Frederick Lau's Sonne as they grow closer is quietly delightful. It's a good 40 minutes before you learn anything of substance about her history back home in Spain, something which surely contravenes several ironclad screenwriting rules, but here only adds to the *vérité* feel.

The extras on this home-entertainment release are appropriately and enjoyably lo-fi. Besides a camera test and footage from the casting calls, there's an affable commentary with Schipper that was recorded in his kitchen. "I'm going to call some people. Otherwise I'd have to invite too many people over," he says cheerily, before Skyping several of the folks he worked with on the film, catching them up on where in the runtime he's at and pointing out mistakes. Somehow, it's hard to imagine Ridley Scott doing the same. **NICK DE SEMLYEN**



Creed

★★★★★

FROM NOW / CERT. 12

DVD Blu-ray

ROCKY OF AGES



THE YEAR 2015 WAS uncharacteristically good for films numbered seventh in a franchise. *The Force Awakens*

returned the Jedi to critical and commercial success, while *Fast & Furious 7* stands as one of the best in its series. And then there's the seventh film to feature Rocky Balboa — named *Creed* to honour its new leading character and signify a passing of the torch. But make no mistake, this is recognisably a *Rocky* film, from the gritty Philly gyms to the back-to-basics training that again (back by popular demand) includes chasing a chicken.

As with the best of Stallone's series (which this ranks alongside), director Ryan Coogler and his writing partner Aaron Covington opt for emotional realism over chest-beating jingoism. Adonis Johnson (Michael B. Jordan), son of Apollo, love interest Bianca (Tessa Thompson) and Rocky all have their crosses to bear — this is a human drama set in the world of boxing, rather than a boxing film adhering to sports-movie clichés. As it should be.

Given the weighty legacy of the series and the surprise factor of its return (Stallone said he was done after 2006's *Rocky Balboa*), the extras are infuriatingly slight. Two featurettes hint at the fascinating backstory, but are content to use bland talking heads in lieu of genuine insight. Although the mostly skippable deleted scenes include Bianca revealing a fun theory that the fight in the opening credits of *The Fresh Prince Of Bel-Air* was fatal, and the show was set in the afterlife. Seems plausible... **JONATHAN PILE**

EMPIRE VIEWING GUIDE

EMPIRE
SPOILER
ALERT!

WORDS CHRIS HEWITT

TAKE A RINGSIDE SEAT AS RYAN COOGLER TALKS US THROUGH HIS BOXING DRAMA



10:28

Little Duke

One *Rocky* stalwart who doesn't appear in the movie is Duke, trainer of first Apollo Creed and then Rocky. Although the character was in early drafts of the script, actor Tony Burton had health problems that prevented him being able to travel; sadly, he died earlier this year. Director Ryan Coogler fashioned a solution by casting Wood Harris as 'Little Duke', Duke's son. "It's a real Easter egg, but Wood grew his moustache out and even spoke like Tony Burton," says Coogler. "And when he loses his temper with Donnie (*Johnson*), it's a family affair."

17:53

We Have A Winner

At the end of *Rocky III*, Rocky and Apollo Creed have one last fight behind closed doors. We never found out the winner — until Rocky tells Adonis, in their first meeting, that Apollo prevailed. "I feel Adonis is the only person Rocky would give that answer to," says Coogler. "And only in those circumstances." But is Rocky telling the truth, or telling Donnie what he wants to hear? "Sly always said Apollo would have won, but we tried to leave stuff open to interpretation."



32:53

Max's Philly Cheesesteak

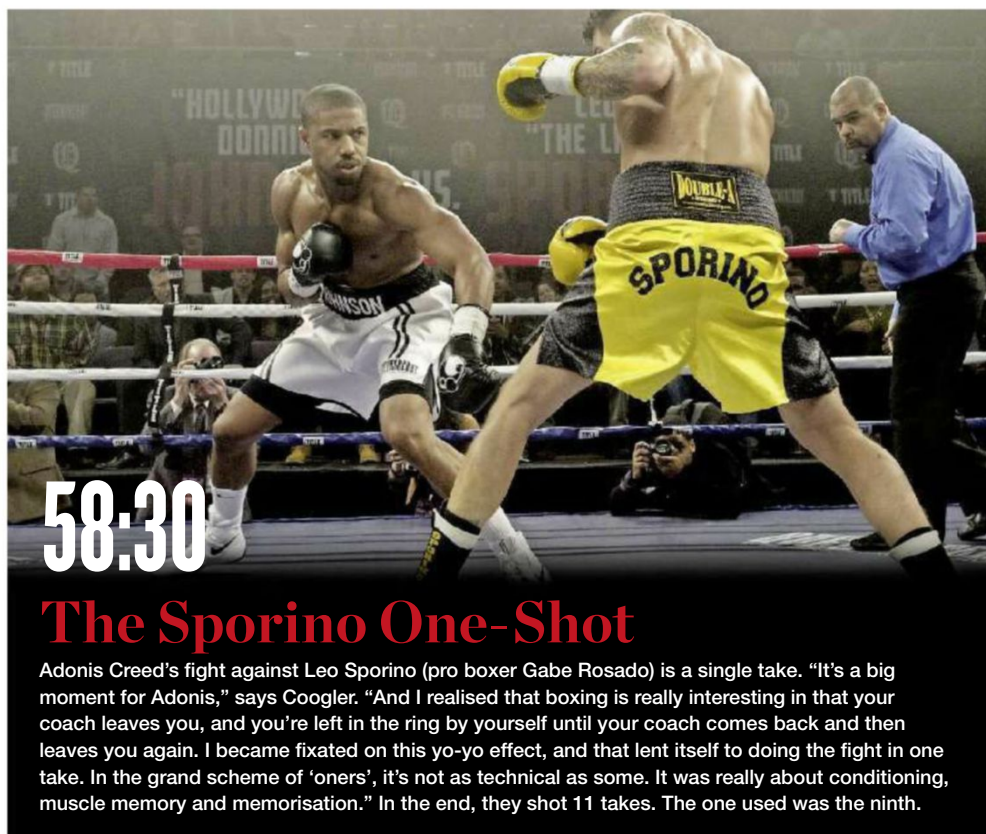
Reinforcing the sense of authenticity in the film's locations, the place where Donnie and Bianca go for a Philly cheesesteak, Max's, is real and can be found at 3653 Germantown Avenue. Presumably Coogler will never have to take his wallet out there again. "If they remember me, that would be nice!" he laughs.

35:50

Farewell, Paulie

"Paulie was around in early drafts," says Coogler of the revelation, as Rocky visits the graveside of his wife, Adrian, that Burt Young's Paulie has passed away since *Rocky Balboa*. Some fans were upset that Young, who had played Paulie since the first *Rocky*, wasn't included this time around, but Coogler says it was purely a storytelling decision. "But we had the realisation that if we took him away, it made Rocky's situation more emotional. The film just worked better for it."





58:30

The Sporino One-Shot

Adonis Creed's fight against Leo Sporino (pro boxer Gabe Rosado) is a single take. "It's a big moment for Adonis," says Coogler. "And I realised that boxing is really interesting in that your coach leaves you, and you're left in the ring by yourself until your coach comes back and then leaves you again. I became fixated on this yo-yo effect, and that lent itself to doing the fight in one take. In the grand scheme of 'oners', it's not as technical as some. It was really about conditioning, muscle memory and memorisation." In the end, they shot 11 takes. The one used was the ninth.

01:57:13 Donnie Is Down

During the final fight with Pretty Ricky Conlan (played by real-life boxer Tony Bellew, the current EBU and former WBO International Cruiserweight champion), Donnie is briefly knocked out. Jordan had to take the punches for real, to properly convey the thumping you get at the hands of a pro. "You only do one of those," laughs Coogler. "You can't do take two, take three, take four..."



01:01:37

The Name's Balboa... Rocky Balboa

After Donnie's triumph over Sporino, he, Rocky and Bianca watch a film together back at the Balboa residence. That film turns out to be, of all things, *Skyfall*. "That's a company joke for me," says Coogler. "Rocky's an MGM movie, and MGM has two franchises — *Bond* and *Rocky*. And the other thing is that *Skyfall* is about James Bond getting old."

01:03:51

Old Age Non-Mutant Ordinary Turtles

In a film where Rocky has been stripped of his family and friends, at least there's one constant in his life: pet turtles Cuff and Link, first introduced in the original *Rocky*. "They are both in that tank," confirms Coogler. "But Cuff gets a close-up!" And a bigger trailer?



01:15:57

RIP Rocky

"We never had a script where Rocky died," says Coogler of Rocky's battle with Non-Hodgkin lymphoma. "For us, just the realisation that Rocky was mortal was enough." For the post-chemotherapy scenes, Stallone wore a bald cap and fake eyebrows. "It was a question of how much?" admits Coogler. "How bald did we want Rocky to get?"

01:45:12 It's All Goodison

The final fight with Ricky Conlan takes place at Goodison Park, the home of Everton FC (Stallone is a fan), and some of it was shot at the stadium during a game, which explains the many blue scarves and flags. But Liverpool FC fans needn't feel left out. "We got some red flags in there," laughs Coogler.

02:06:19 The Final Shot

"The script always ended with that image," says Coogler of the moment where Rocky and his protégé climb the famous steps of Philadelphia City Hall, and look out at a world that holds endless promise. Rocky's final words — "You can see the whole town from here" — were written at the very last minute. "In the script they didn't say anything, but we had the guys improv once they got to the top. Sly really liked that line."





Kim Newman's MOVIE DUNGEON

FROM ITALY TO INDONESIA, A HOTCHPOTCH OF HORRORS

ILLUSTRATION JOHN ROYLE



UCIANO ERCOLI isn't one of the better-known Italian genre filmmakers, but the new reissues of his 1970s lady-in-peril thrillers *Death Walks In High Heels* and *Death Walks At Midnight* are a lot of fun. In *High Heels*, Susan Scott (aka Nieves Navarro) is a French stripper hiding from a razor-slasher in an English seaside town. In *Walks At Midnight*, she's a Milanese model who witnesses (or imagines) a killing while hallucinating. The films are full of sinister suspects, useless cops and boyfriends, shock murders, quaint eccentricity, bursts of action, fabulous '70s couture and décor and absurdly intricate plots.

Back in the here and now, Derek Mungor and Chris O'Brien's *You Are Not Alone* is an example of first-person cinema — back in vogue now with *Hardcore Henry* — that unreels from the POV of the final girl in a slasher movie. The long, not-much-happening opening sequences of a girl (Krista Dzialoszynski)

visiting home for the Fourth Of July set up a hectic chased-around-by-a-loon finale. It's an essay in why most films don't tell their stories like this as much as it is a suspenseful John Carpenter homage.

Adam Robitel's *The Taking* (aka *The Taking Of Deborah Logan*) is a more conventional found-footage drama. A student crew films Deborah (Jill Larson), a spirited old lady seemingly coping with dementia — it becomes clear she actually has more supernatural problems. It's a carefully developed premise, with a standout performance from Larson and a solid mystery behind the possession.

Declan Dale, director of *Exposed*, is the pseudonym adopted by pissed-off auteur Gee Malik Linton because the studio recut his film so it would play more like a Keanu Reeves cop thriller than an inside-the-mind-of-a-damaged-woman movie. It has disorientating elements, as albino angels appear to a Dominican girl (Ana de Armas) in New York while Reeves investigates the murder of his crooked partner. The film crashes whenever it threatens to soar, but fragments of what Linton had in mind are visible, and de Armas is very good.

Ritual, from Indonesian writer-director Joko Anwar, is another puzzle, telling the same story from different viewpoints as a man (Rio Dewanto) wakes up in a shallow grave in the woods and flees persecuting killers. The penny drops halfway through, but the film then brings on new characters and swaps suspense for horror. Finally, Brian James O'Connell's *Bloodsucking Bosses* (aka *Bloodsucking Bastards*) pits sales schmoe Fran Kranz against his new manager (Pedro Pascal), who is so smarmily obnoxious, the fact he's a vampire is the least upsetting thing about him. Puts your superiors in perspective.

"IT'S A BRILLIANT
INTERPRETATION
OF CHEESE,
WOULDN'T
YOU SAY?"
**DEATH WALKS
AT MIDNIGHT**



PICKS OF THE MONTH

Respectable: The Mary Millington Story



→ This documentary entertainingly opens up worm-cans as it blazes through the short life of leading 1970s' British porn star Mary Millington.

The tiny, outgoing blonde moved from semi-underground hardcore to bubbly softcore smut (*Come Play With Me*), became the smiling yet troubled image of a beleaguered industry in an era of repression and hypocrisy, and died young in mysterious circumstances. It has great anecdotes, rude clips and an Amy-like unhappy ending.

JeruZalem



→ Doron and Yoav Paz's Israeli supernatural horror adapts the found-footage format to a Google Glass-type device, worn by an American tourist

visiting Jerusalem just as a Biblical apocalypse breaks out in the old part of town. Presenting the end of days in the manner of *Cloverfield*, with clever use of frills such as facial-recognition software, this was shot on the fly (with ragged wing demons added later) around tourist attractions and has a great sense of escalating cataclysm.

The Sound Barrier



→ This David Lean film is ostensibly a tale of heroic achievement — the breaking of the sound barrier — but plays best as a terrifying, typically clipped

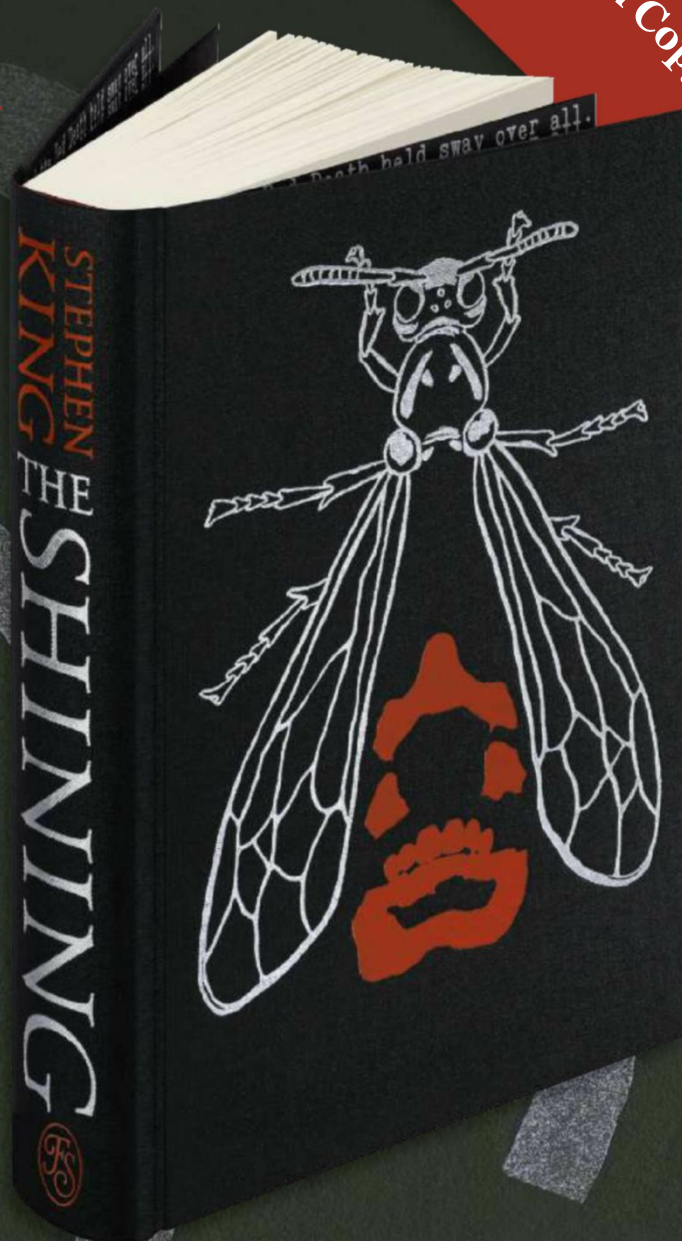
Terence Rattigan family drama. Aviation tycoon Ralph Richardson bullies son Denholm Elliott into flying (he fatally prangs in training), then sacrifices his son-in-law (Nigel Patrick) in pursuit of a breakthrough. His daughter (Ann Todd) can't see the point of all the death until Richardson's inspiring, ambiguous lecture. Starched chat on the ground, with eerie, magnificent flying scenes.

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THE CRIB SHEET

ALICE IN WONDERLAND

BEFORE *ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS* LANDS ON MAY 27, GO DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE AGAIN WORDS KIM NEWMAN



FILM GUIDE

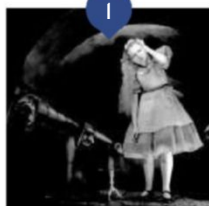
SUMMARY

ALICE

DEGREE OF TRIPPINESS

CELEBRITY CASTING

SONGS



ALICE IN WONDERLAND
(1933)

A lavish Paramount version, directed by Norman Z. McLeod (as a change from his relatively sane Marx Brothers movies), using the frame of *Through The Looking Glass* and the plot (such as it is) of *Wonderland*. One of those studio gigs where every star on the lot turned up for a few minutes' work. Okay for children, if a bit stuffy.

Nineteen year-old, Brooklyn-born blonde Charlotte Henry, playing younger and sort of English.

Surprisingly high for the period, with animated sequences and size-changing special effects.

Cary Grant (the Mock Turtle), Gary Cooper (the White Knight), W. C. Fields (Humpty-Dumpty), Edward Everett Horton (the Mad Hatter).

It uses Lewis Carroll's verses (*Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Bat; The Lobster Quadrille* etc.) with music by Dimitri Tiomkin.



ALICE IN WONDERLAND
(1951)

The still-enchancing Disney animated version (directed by Clyde Geronimi, Wilfred Jackson and Hamilton Luske), which streamlines the Victorian weirdness into a pell-mell series of turns and jokes. As a translation of Carroll into a purely cinematic language, its only rival is Jan Svankmajer's stop-motion extravaganza *Alice*.

Twenty-three year-old Kathryn Beaumont's voice and a strikingly designed, non-princessy animation model.

Not as far-out as *Fantasia*, but certainly mildly hallucinogenic.

Ed Wynn (the Mad Hatter), Richard Haydn (the Caterpillar), Sterling Holloway (the Cheshire Cat), Jerry Colonna (the March Hare).

I'm Late, Painting The Roses Red and The Caucus Race by Bob Hilliard and Sammy Fain. *A Very Merry Un-Birthday Song (The Un-Birthday Song)* by Mack David, Al Hoffman and Jerry Livingston.



ALICE IN WONDERLAND
(1966)

Jonathan Miller's lo-fi take for the BBC is aimed at adults and features trippy editing, an actual cat and a large, eclectic cast milling about a Wonderland that looks like rainy British countryside. On release it was met with bewilderment by the British tabloids; on his DVD commentary, Miller recalls it being called "pornographic".

Fourteen year-old, pre-Raphaelite-looking Anne-Marie Mallik, who is less cheerful than most screen Alices.

It has Ravi Shankar playing the sitar on the soundtrack, and the dwarf butler from *The Prisoner* (Angelo Muscat) is in it.

Alan Bennett (the Mouse), Michael Redgrave (the Caterpillar), Leo McKern (the Duchess), Peter Cook (the Mad Hatter), Peter Sellers (the King Of Hearts), John Gielgud (the Mock Turtle).

No, though a lot of the poems are sort of sing-spieled by eccentric performers.



ALICE IN WONDERLAND
(2010)

A 're-imagining' of the Disney animation, as a grown-up Alice revisits the fantasy world she knew as a girl and finds things darker. Accordingly, she starts a violent revolution to overthrow the monarchy. Johnny Depp's Mad Hatter eyes and Helena Bonham Carter's Red Queen head will give you nightmares.

Twenty-one year-old Australian Mia Wasikowska as a grown-up, kick-ass revolutionary Alice returning to 'Underland' to avoid marrying a git.

More action and adventure than surrealism — though some of the old Tim Burton Gothic perversity creeps in. The climax suggests that in the real world Alice is heading to China to start the Opium Wars.

Christopher Lee (the Jabberwocky), Anne Hathaway (the White Queen), Matt Lucas (Tweedledee/Tweedledum), Alan Rickman (the Blue Caterpillar), Stephen Fry (the Cheshire Cat), Michael Sheen (the White Rabbit).

Avril Lavigne wrote and sang the theme song and there's a typically burbling Danny Elfman score.



Triple 9

★★★

FROM JUNE 13 / CERT. 15



→ A dirty-cop thriller that fails to live up to its stellar cast. Or, indeed, its opening play — a bank job gone wrong that ends with the getaway car spewing pink smoke on an Atlanta freeway. From then, the thin characters and their odd decisions nearly derail the film. Casey Affleck, Anthony Mackie et al are on form; it's a shame they aren't better served by the material. **JP**



Ride Along 2

★★

FROM NOW / CERT. 12



→ The first *Ride Along* was a surprise success. Hence this new adventure for lethal weapons Ice Cube (with the emphasis on lethal) and Kevin Hart (with the emphasis on weapon), in which the bickering cops head to Miami. It's a sequel on auto-pilot, with standard action and buddy-buddy banter, though the chemistry between the leads is still enjoyable. **CH**



Dirty Grandpa

★★

FROM NOW / CERT. 15



→ Sexually frustrated widower Dick (Robert De Niro) tricks his strait-laced grandson Jason (Zac Efron) into driving him to Daytona Beach for Spring Break. With unnecessary cock shots, swastikas and a pile-up of racist/homophobic jokes, *Dirty Grandpa* throws everything at the wall, but not a lot sticks. Remember the days when De Niro won Oscars? **ET**



Go With Me

★

FROM JUNE 6 / CERT. 15



→ Anthony Hopkins scrapes the bottom of a self-built barrel here, as an ageing lumberjack in a comatose Canadian logging town. When Julia Stiles' feeble waitress is terrorised by local rent-a-bastard Ray Liotta, Hopkins aids her dreary revenge. So low-key it feels like a filmed read-through, this ineptly plotted snooze is as creaky as its setting. **NA**



Moonwalkers

★★

FROM MAY 30 / CERT. TBC



→ A band manager (Rupert Grint) gets mixed up in a CIA conspiracy to fake the 1969 lunar landing. Mishaps involving Stanley Kubrick ensue. Grint and Robert Sheehan mug furiously, while Ron Perlman punches almost every cast member, but this is one very small step for comedy. *Toast Of London* tackled the same topic much more amusingly last year. **NDS**



Desert Dancer

★★

FROM NOW / CERT. 15



→ Akram Khan's virtuoso choreography, in this true-life tale of covert dancers during the height of Iran's Green Movement, can't be denied. It's the bits in-between that don't quite stack up. A biopic that plays rigidly by-the-numbers, it offers few original flourishes for such fertile historical terrain; a heroin-addiction subplot, in particular, ensures it wobbles rather than whirls. **JNU**



The Forest

★★

FROM JUNE 20 / CERT. 15



→ Two elements bring colour to this anaemic horror: its basis in a genuine Japanese legend, and great work from Natalie Dormer as twin sisters. Sadly, the screenplay treats the Aokigahara Forest — notorious as a destination for the suicidal — with all the sensitivity of the American tourist it sends blundering through it, but manages a few scares. **OW**



The Sweeney: Paris

★★

FROM JUNE 20 / CERT. 15



→ Who knew our French frères yearned to make their own Cockneys-vs.-gangsters thrillers? Yet here is their spin on *The Sweeney*, with Jean Reno in the Ray Winstone/John Thaw role. The tone — a British mix of violence and cheek — feels strange among *policiers*, and while at times fun, it's also regressive and puerile, made too cheaply for its ambition. **HOH**



A Bigger Splash

★★★

FROM JUNE 13 / CERT. 15



→ Italian director Luca Guadagnino reunites with *I Am Love* lead Tilda Swinton to deliver something more crowdpleasing. That's mainly thanks to Ralph Fiennes, as the music producer who hijacks the holiday of his ex (Swinton) and her current love (Matthias Schoenaerts). A shame, then, that a tonal flip leaves you feeling somewhat cold, despite Fiennes' firecracker turn. **DJ**



ADVENTURES IN STREAMING

EACH ISSUE, OUR INTREPID WRITER FOLLOWS NETFLIX'S COMPUTER-CALIBRATED RECOMMENDATIONS, GOING WHEREVER THE TRAIL LEADS

WORDS SIMON CROOK

Jason Statham

AYBE IT'S DOWN TO the RADA Mafia, but the UK rarely produces international action stars. Which makes Jason Statham such a gloriously unlikely phenomenon — as British as an Olympic Breakfast, hard as a concrete nail and a DIY stunt don, his rise to the A-list isn't celebrated nearly enough. There are no fewer than 13 of his movies on Netflix, from *Wild Card* to *The Expendables*. God only knows what we'll get. Let the Stath-roulette begin...

Set in sweltering Louisiana, brutish, scowling thriller ***The Mechanic*** is archetypal Statham — a Brit-abroad hitman with porn-star sunglasses, bulletproof stubble and an über-Stath name, Arthur Bishop. Antiheroes are a Statham speciality, but nihilistic maniac Bishop is extreme even by his standards. First, he assassinates his own mentor. Then he unwisely adopts his mentor's son (Ben Foster) and shapes him into a hitman. Opening with a suicidal hurl off a 100-foot bridge, the stunts are gobsmacking in a merely solid thriller that, nonetheless, has its moments. The sequence where they take down a ketamine-junkie televangelist in a skyscraper fortress is breathlessly staged by Simon West, although why they're camouflaged in S.W.A.T.-team black during the daytime qualifies as a total stealth fail. Sequel *Mechanic: Resurrection* vrooms into cinemas later this year...

Cinematic cattle-prod ***Crank: High Voltage*** sees the return of Statham's unkillable cockney hitman, Chev Chelios. This time, his heart's been nicked by LA triads. Cue a frantic organ-chase, as Chelios tasers his electric ticker to stay alive. Surreal highlight: mutating into a roaring Stathzilla for a power-station scrap. Mark Neveldine/Brian Taylor's relentless ADHD style frazzles like a grotesque action-cartoon, as does Statham — the scowl loosens into a mad-eyed gurn. Check out the dog-collar scene — his performance is literally barking.

Arguably his signature role, ***Transporter 3*** is Statham's last stab at kung-fu courier Frank Martin. Much like *Crank*, there's a time-bomb gimmick in the form of an exploding bracelet: stray too far from his Audi A8 and Frank goes boom, as does his "package", Natalya Rudakova. I've got a lot of time for the *Transporter* series — the closest the West has ever



got to cloning Jackie Chan — but 50 minutes into part three, there's plenty of action but still no sign of a story. Probably for the best, given that the eventually revealed plot hinges on the EU's policy on industrial pollutants. If you think Michael Bay "fucks the frame", Olivier Megaton's cuts suggest a Viagra overdose in the edit room — great for rabid pacing, less so for The Stath's intricate fight choreography, here reduced to a blur of windmilling limbs.

Ghosts Of Mars is a sloppy John Carpenter movie, but from a Statham perspective it's fascinating. This was his first Hollywood appearance, made when he still had fluffy-duckling hair. It's 2176AD, and ancient demonic dust has possessed a Martian mining colony. Enter Statham as space-copper Jericho Butler, armed with a gun the size of a leg. "What the fuck is going on?" he yells as the invaders lay siege. Well, it's a good fucking question. Tumbling into a vortex of clumsy flashbacks, Carpenter loses his grip on the plot, but, fatally, the action too: the Mad Maxy Martians lope around as if someone's set the fire alarm off at a Monsters Of Rock festival. Still, Statham's easily the best thing in it. And would have been even better if he'd been allowed to play Snake Plissken-alike Desolation Williams, as originally planned — the role went to waddling badass Ice Cube.

I'm keeping my eyes crossed for an explosive finale, but no, Netflix is in a proper mood. We end with a clunk: Uwe Boll's unholy *Dungeon Siege* spin-off, ***In The Name Of The King***. Boll's adaptation of the RPG is truly Tolkien the piss — a kind of *'Lord Of The Wrongs'*, complete with Orc-a-like army that look like angry cowpats. Introduced digging up a swede, Statham plays a farmer called, er, Farmer. Being a farmer, he is, of course, lethally proficient with a boomerang. Yes. Despite it resembling a cheesy quest that fell out of a video-van circa 1983, Boll doesn't even have the decency to camp it up: instead, we're served epically boring fantasy porridge with lumps of regional panto (hello, Ray Liotta's Liberace wizard). Happily, The Stath remains unbroken: even in dross, he gives his stubbly all. Maybe he can deploy the swordfighting skills on another movie. Or on Uwe Boll.

NEW TO STREAMING

Special Correspondents

★★

OUT NOW / CERT. 15

R

THE FUGITIVES



CHARACTERS DON'T have to be likable to make great comedy. Some of the finest comic creations are bastards (Malcolm Tucker), weirdos

(Pee-wee Herman) or nincompoops (Inspector Clouseau). But even the worst have to have some redeeming feature, and it's that spark of grace that's missing from Ricky Gervais' latest movie as writer, director and star.

A remake of 2009 French film *Envoyés Très Spéciaux*, it sees two radio journalists convincing the world that they are reporting from a war zone, when in fact they have lost their tickets and are stuck at home, faking the broadcasts and, when that gets too tiring, their own kidnapping. Gervais is Ian, the hapless tech responsible for their predicament. Eric Bana is Frank, the too-cool anchorman forced into a shaky alliance with him — made



Ricky Gervais and Eric Bana wage war on their livers.

particularly fragile because he slept with his comrade's wife shortly before.

But it's hard to care. Gervais may look hangdog, but here he's hopeless as the underdog. Instead he gives us a caricature, a mass of geeky, half-hearted tropes about video games and comics, things that Gervais himself appears to despise. Bana's character never seems either appalling enough to be shocking or nice enough to be worth rooting for. Worst, however, is Vera Farmiga as Ian's faithless wife, a one-dimensional harpy without a redeeming feature.

Trying desperately to balance things out is Kelly Macdonald's saintly Claire, who has a rather unlikely crush on Ian and no other character traits at all, and

America Ferrera and Raúl Castillo as the impossibly nice-but-dim couple who offer the two fugitives shelter. None of them feel like human beings, which is a problem when the film strives — as it sporadically does — to make a serious point about media manipulation. But it doesn't seem to know what point that is, ending up with Gervais running about with a gun.

Subplots and character motivations are raised and dropped apparently at random, and in the modern internet age the premise rings even less credible than the similarly themed *Wag The Dog*. It should be funnier, and more thoughtful — but instead it feels like Gervais phoned it in from across the road. **HELEN O'HARA**

ALSO STREAMING



NINA FOREVER

A

One of the best British horror films to emerge in years, this stars Fiona O'Shaughnessy as a dead woman who returns to life whenever her ex tries to have sex with his new girlfriend. Dark, twisted and very funny.

OUT NOW



MISTRESS AMERICA

SM

Greta Gerwig plays a New York hipster going nowhere fast in Noah Baumbach's sharply observed comedy, studded with smart dialogue: "I'm an autodidact. That's one of the words I self-taught myself."

FROM JUNE 10



THE DO-OVER

N

Yes, it's a new Adam Sandler film, but don't run away: this one at least has a promising trailer. David Spade plays a dweeby loser who yearns for a different life; Sandler the tattooed mystery man who decides to help him by faking his death.

FROM MAY 27



THE FUNDAMENTALS OF CARING

N

Paul Rudd teams up with Craig Roberts in this straight-to-Netflix film about an emotionally-crippled caregiver and his smart-arse charge. Also features Selena Gomez swearing up a storm.

FROM JUNE 24



VACATION

SM

Ed Helms replaces Chevy Chase behind the wheel, but it's still bad-taste business as usual for the Griswolds. The highlight: their Tartan Prancer car ("the Honda of Albania!") and the many incredibly dangerous buttons on its key fob.

FROM JUNE 23



BLOODLINE: SEASON 2

M

The Florida Keys-set thriller returns, twisty as a swamp snake. Centred on the Rayburn family, every member of which has a dozen secrets, it's full of great performances from the likes of Sissy Spacek and Kyle Chandler.

FROM MAY 27



SPY

SM

Prep for *Ghostbusters* with Paul Feig's last movie, a gloriously silly espionage adventure involving 50 Cent, bats and Jason Statham as boastful secret agent Rick Ford: "I drove a car off a freeway on top of a train while it was on fire..."

FROM JUNE 3



Gilda



1946 / FROM JUNE 27 / CERT. 12



A MAME TO KILL FOR



ILDA, THE SIREN played by Rita Hayworth, provokes obsession in everyone she encounters.

Gilda, the film, has a similar effect. "I was completely perplexed by the picture," says Martin Scorsese, who saw it aged 11, on this Criterion Blu-ray's extras. "I had no idea what was happening... but I kept watching it again and again." Can it be a coincidence he went on to make his own tale of a warped love triangle in 1995's *Casino*? Baz Luhrmann also recounts how the movie got a grip on him: he

modelled Nicole Kidman's *Moulin Rouge!* hairdo on Gilda's locks. Once experienced, it's not easily forgotten.

Aptly enough, the film was born out of infatuation. Harry Cohn, the head of Columbia Pictures, was smitten with Hayworth and ordered a vehicle to showcase her charms. Hence this tale in which small-time crook Johnny Farrell (Glenn Ford) gets hired to run a shady Buenos Aires casino, only to find his new boss (George Macready) has married his old flame. Hayworth is ridiculously sexy throughout, from her hair-tossing introductory close-up to the precision-choreographed song and dance. The wardrobe budget was astronomical: she wears 29 costumes over 110 minutes, with two of the furs alone costing \$100,000.

But there's a lot more to *Gilda* than glamour. It shares many of the ingredients of *Casablanca*, with its exotic locale, old lovers reunited and even a gaggle of sinister Germans, yet peculiar

Above: "Let the drinking games commence." **Below:** Ford and Hayworth took to catalogue modelling like pros.

psychological undercurrents mark it out as unique. Macready's Ballin Mundson is the obvious villain: he creepily calls his sword-cane his "little friend" and at one point dons a cape. But Johnny is arguably worse. His love has curdled into hate. It's a film about the ultimate on-off relationship, and how romance can warp into something dark and destructive.

Hayworth was later to rue the effect the movie had on her life, complaining that, "Men go to bed with Gilda, but wake up with me." But if the performance was detrimental to her happiness, it has made countless viewers (including Red and friends in *The Shawshank Redemption*) sit up straight in the decades since. It's an astonishingly nuanced turn, arcing from sultriness to vulnerability, best exemplified by her two renditions

of *Put The Blame On Mame*. The first is a warm, guitar-strumming lullaby; the second a drunken striptease in defiance of Johnny's domination. No wonder little Marty's mind was blown. **NICK DE SEMLYEN**



ALSO OUT

**Nuns On The Run**

★★

1990 / FROM JUNE 27 / CERT. 15

DVD

→ *Some Like It Hot* with wimples, Jonathan Lynn's ecclesiastical cross-dressing caper sees two London gangsters (Eric Idle and Robbie Coltrane) hole up in a convent after ripping off the Triads. The gags are far from sophisticated but the duo's falsetto blagging is ridiculous enough to prompt the occasional chuckle. **JD**

**A Chorus Line**

★★

1985 / FROM JULY 4 / CERT. 12

R

→ Eavesdropping on a savage audition (17 dancers, eight parts, one sadistic director), Michael Bennett's musical is a sad, gritty exposé of Broadway's merciless grind. Richard Attenborough's upbeat screen adaptation misses the point. An excruciatingly kitsch endurance, set to a ghastly '80s Ceefax score. **SC**

**1900**

★★★★

1976 / FROM NOW / CERT. 18

R

→ Bernardo Bertolucci's epic follows two friends, peasant Gérard Depardieu and aristocrat Robert De Niro, through five decades of Italian class struggle. Made by cinema's greatest artisans (composer Ennio Morricone, DP Vittorio Storaro), it is operatic in style, ambition and length (five hours and 15 minutes over two discs). **IF**

**Enemy Mine**

★★★★

1985 / FROM JUNE 20 / CERT. 12

INTERDEPENDENCE DAY

T'S HARD TO imagine anyone's list of great '80s sci-fi movies, however long, including 1985's *Enemy Mine*.

It didn't exactly enjoy

auspicious beginnings. After Terry Gilliam turned it down, it went into production at 20th Century Fox with Richard Loncraine at the helm, was shut down a week into shooting because of creative differences, and then relaunched from scratch with Wolfgang Petersen directing. It ran massively overbudget, received shruggy reviews and died at the US box office. It's since enjoyed no cult resurgence, no second life in home entertainment. And yet, with this bare-bones Blu-ray debut (one extended scene, that's yer lot), it is worth revisiting.

Relocating the premise of John Boorman's 1968 World War II yarn *Hell In The Pacific* to deep space, *Enemy Mine* co-stars a fresh-faced Dennis Quaid and a prosthetics-swaddled Louis Gossett Jr. as human and alien foes. Stranded on an inhospitable world, they are forced to



Top: Having started with politics, next they'd try religion. Above: The Nando's was definitely round here according to Google Maps.

work together to survive. Naturally, it turns out the reptilian, hermaphrodite Drac has more to teach the aggressive, ignorant human than vice versa.

Quaid and Gossett transcend the fakey VFX and sets (more *Battle Beyond The Stars* than *Star Wars*), their on-screen companionship taking an interesting turn when "Jerry" the Drac reveals it's pregnant and Davidge the Earthling realises he's going to become a 'parent'. It gives the film an unexpected, almost-John Hughes vibe for a while (*It's Having A Lizard-baby?*) in a much warmer, more sentimental movie than the set-up suggests — too warm, perhaps, for something released while the Cold War was still going strong. Maybe if it had been released a few years later, once Glasnost had really kicked in, it may have enjoyed the success it better deserved. **DAN JOLIN**

“Historical adventure has rarely been this thrilling.”

The Last Of The Mohicans

1992 / OUT NOW / CERT. 15



THE FINAL FRONTIER

BY 1992, MICHAEL MANN HAD DIRECTED *Manhunter* and spent the best part of a decade showrunning *Miami Vice*. In the years since, crime thrillers have remained his principal passion. Romantic historical action-adventure *The Last Of The Mohicans* is still an anomaly on his CV.

While historically reverent, it doesn't actually have a lot of time for the James Fenimore Cooper novel on which it's nominally based. Instead, Mann was channelling the svelte 1936 movie version he'd been indelibly impressed by when he saw it on television as a child. Cooper's 1826 “classic” — still widely studied on American literature courses — is, to modern eyes, barely readable: laughably written (a tracker picks up a trail under the water of a stream, for example, and the hero spends a significant amount of time disguised as a bear; Mark Twain wrote an essay in 1895 about Cooper's copious “Literary Offenses”) and at odds with 21st-century sensibilities in its siding with the colonial invaders. As a considerable landowner himself, Cooper was of the opinion that the potential the whites saw for the exploitation of the land far outweighed any Native American rights to it.

Mann's film, then, completely subverts the author's agenda, giving space to the complex factional politics between the British, French and indigenous tribes. While there's palpable threat from the Huron antagonists, there's context for their actions. Wes Studi, in particular, gets to be a far more complex villain than he did as a cartoon scalper in *Dances With Wolves*. Magua can be properly vicious, but we're left with no illusions about his bitterness under the yoke of colonialism and his own



1 Hawkeye (Daniel Day-Lewis) amid the fray, as the British are attacked by the Huron.

2 Wes Studi as morally complex villain Magua.

3 Hawkeye finds himself in irons after aiding British soldiers to desert.



WORDS
OWEN WILLIAMS

tragic history. The British and French see him as a tame dog, but he'll bite his “masters” at the first opportunity. And while we might not like him, we can't really blame him for that. Magua understands the English very well.

Other performances are equally strong. The chameleonic Daniel Day-Lewis inhabits his character, Hawkeye, as always: while shooting he kept his rifle by his side both on and off set, besides undergoing months of survivalist training. By the time shooting started, he was a functioning frontiersman, capable of living off the land, alone, for weeks at a time. Madeleine Stowe combines pre-Raphaelite beauty with earthy courage as Cora Munro, daughter of the British colonel who is Magua's most hated enemy; Steven Waddington is stoic as the ultimately hapless Major Heyward; and Russell Means — himself a Native American activist — imbues the final Mohican, Chingachgook, with gravitas and nobility. Like the film, the character is doleful, honourable and deeply sincere.

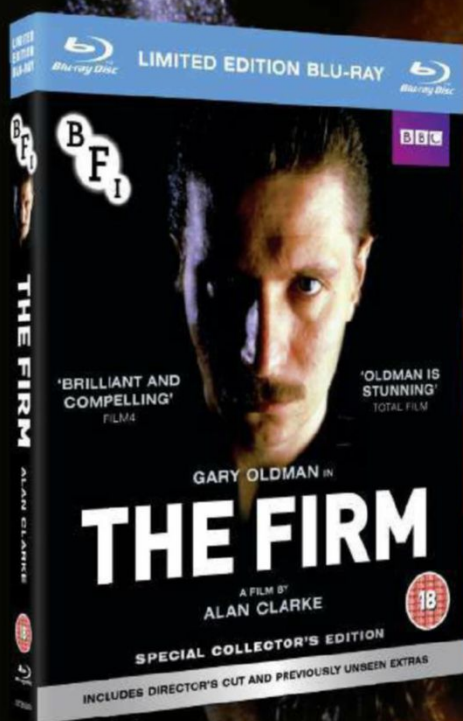
As Cora's sister Alice and Chingachgook's son Uncas, Jodhi May and Eric Schweig admittedly have less material to work with, but they nevertheless manage to convey a love affair entirely through looks. That silence is part of the film's unique atmosphere. Several of *The Last Of The Mohicans'* major moments are accompanied by little more than the ambient whisper of

the incredible landscape: a vast, beautiful expanse that dwarfs the action. Randy Edelman and Trevor Jones' memorable score — a last-minute victory pulled from the jaws of defeat when Mann reversed his decision to go electronic — complements that quiet, rather than drowning it out. If you can take or leave the sudden intrusion of folk group Clannad's theme, at least they try to be authentic: the lyrics are in English, Mohican and Cherokee.

And then there are those landscapes. Dante Spinotti's cinematography is key, framing the breathtaking Appalachian vistas (he's good at dark, smoky interiors too) and capturing any number of amazing moments. There's the firework display in the distance that's gradually revealed to be a musket battle; the final wordless sequence on the promontory; and the “I will find you” jump through the waterfall (a similar scene in *The Fugitive*, released a year later, looks slight in comparison). The violence is visceral, but the emotional moments are equally strong. Even when it's awash with blood, Spinotti keeps the film beautiful.

Mann has released various cuts of *The Last Of The Mohicans* in the years since its original release, but the differences are minimal and can be hard to even spot. Crucially, he's never significantly added to its length. It's an undeniably epic film, yet it's lean and has momentum, with the various versions all clocking in at around two hours. Historical adventure filmmaking in the decades since has rarely if ever been this passionate, solemn, or thrilling — at least, not all at once. But the movie does have its descendants. At the end of the film, Hawkeye, Cora and Chingachgook look out from the mountain and consider what lies ahead. Shot in similar locations but set about 70 years later, the battle-torn vistas of *The Revenant* provide the gloomy answer.

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WORDS SIMON CROOK

THE MONTH'S BIGGEST RE-RELEASES

Archive

Scott Of The Antarctic

1948

★★★★



FROM NOW

CERT. U

DVD BR

→ Upper lip stiff as a popsicle, John Mills leads a recreation of Captain Scott's cursed South Pole expedition, a noble failure that mirrored the British Empire's collapse into a crevasse. As doom-drenched drama, it exerts a crampon-like grip, but special mention to Technicolor wizard Jack Cardiff, whose hostile panoramas are so vividly alien, the expedition resembles a trek across Europa.

Stop! Or My Mom Will Shoot

1992

★



FROM JUNE 13

CERT. PG

DVD BR

→ The buddy-cop cycle walked into the sea with this ghastly action-comedy that teams tough detective (Sylvester Stallone) with meddling mum (Estelle Getty). Sample gag: "Go ahead, make your bed." Three writers came up with that. Stallone's disowned it, and no wonder: the Sly-in-a-nappy dream sequence is, literally, a career bottom.

Solar Warriors

1986

★★



FROM JUNE 27

CERT. 15

DVD BR

→ Trapped in a post-apocalyptic quarry, orphans escape their fascist overlords via the power of rollerskating. Set on a water-starved Earth but drizzily staged, Hollywood sent its Brat Pack B-Team (Jason Patric! Jami Gertz!) into this cheerfully lousy sci-fi, designed as a collision between *Mad Max* and *Starlight Express*. Co-starring, somehow, Alexei Sayle as a scavenging Scouser.

Black Orpheus

1959

★★★★★



FROM JUNE 27

CERT. PG

BR

→ Greek myth to a bossa-nova beat. Director Marcel Camus escalates Orpheus' obsession by recasting the doomed lover as a tram conductor in carnival-ravaged Rio — a magic-realist masterstroke that blends earthy romance with exotic voodoo. Set to throbbing samba, Camus' visuals blaze like confetti in one of world cinema's most sense-rattling experiences.

Ghostbusters

1984

★★★★★



FROM JUNE 27

CERT. PG

BR

→ Will Paul Feig's reboot cross the streams? This reissue, in 4K Ultra-HD, is what he's up against: an FX-driven spook-com that retains the dirty rogue laughs of an *SNL* sketch (altogether now: "This man has no dick"). As well as the remastered visuals, this package includes previous extras: deleted skits, Reitman commentary and trivia-track hosted by snotball Slimer.

The Face Of Eve

1968

★★



FROM JUNE 13

CERT. 12

DVD

→ Armed with whip and vine-swinging powers, Celeste Yarnall's Eve looks like she was raised on hairspray in this kitsch 'Jungle Girl' romp shot in the Amazon. Christopher Lee and Herbert Lom strain for gravitas in an otherwise pulpy safari that, canoe-chase finale aside, quicksands into a sucky mid-section more padded than Yarnall's leopard-print bra.

Highlander

1986

★★★



FROM JUNE 13

CERT. 12

DVD BR

→ Russell Mulcahy's saga of cursed immortals and victorious decapitation is, essentially, a heroic-zombie horror, with an aptly stiff Christopher Lambert as its undead warrior. Direlogue and dodgy accents abound (hello, Sean Connery's "*Egypt-sh-ian*") but Mulcahy's operatic visuals look fantastic in HD. Mind you, given the many shabby spin-offs, there really *should've* been only one.

Ferris Bueller's Day Off

1986

★★★★★



FROM JUNE 13

CERT. 15

DVD BR

→ After the angst-ridden *The Breakfast Club*, John Hughes zapped out this joyous celebration of skiving-off. On paper, Ferris is a selfish shit-heel; it's Matthew Broderick's cocky charisma that makes him so irresistible. One of the 1980s' key comedies, incredibly it was written in a week. Hence the infectious, frisky energy. Moves pretty fast. Don't miss it.

Easy Rider

1969

★★★★



FROM NOW

CERT. 18

BR

→ The Criterion Collection has finally launched in the UK: among its second wave of re-issue titles is Dennis Hopper's legendary counter-culture biker film. A fascinating if dated curio, it marked the death of the 1960s while birthing the new Hollywood. Among the excellent extras: documentary *Shaking The Cage*, a roasting exposé of the stormy, paranoid, drug-boggled shoot.

ALSO OUT

The Devil's Backbone and Pan's Labyrinth: Studies In The Horror Film

★★★★

AUTHOR DANIEL OLSON / OUT JUNE 14



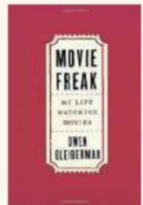
→ The work of Guillermo del Toro has always seemed ripe for academic examination. And this book, focusing on the twin peaks of *The Devil's Backbone*

and *Pan's Labyrinth*, delivers. The essays are rich, but the prize here is a series of interviews with del Toro's collaborators, culminating in three with the man himself. Indispensable for GDT fans. **CH**

Movie Freak: My Life Watching Movies

★★★

AUTHOR OWEN GLEIBERMAN / OUT NOW



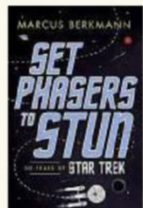
→ Former *Entertainment Weekly* film critic Owen Gleiberman follows in the late, great Roger Ebert's footsteps by writing a memoir of his life

at the movies. It's brutally honest (he digs into his early addiction to porn) and studded with witty turns of phrase (Mia Farrow's hairdo in *Rosemary's Baby* is "Auschwitz-by-Sassoon"), but could have done with an edit. **NDS**

Set Phasers To Stun: 50 Years Of Star Trek

★★★★

AUTHOR MARCUS BERKMANN / OUT NOW



→ If you enjoy *Star Trek* but don't secretly wish you could wear Spock ears daily, this is the book for you. Berkman writes for those interested in

but not fanatical about the property, packing in *Trek* history but never assuming knowledge. From his brutally honest episode summaries to his willingness to deconstruct persistent myths, the result is more entertaining, and considerably more useful, than a bucket of Tribbles. **HOH**

Citizen Kane: A Filmmaker's Journey

★★★★★

AUTHOR HARLAN LEBO / OUT NOW

SPECIAL K



EGEND HAS IT Orson Welles learned to read at the age of two, discussed politics at three and wrote his first play at nine.

It's not surprising,

then, that Welles, aged just 25, went on to write, direct, produce and star in arguably the Greatest Film Of All Time.

Already the author of coffee-table book *Citizen Kane: The Fiftieth-Anniversary Album*, Harlan Lebo has written this text-heavier celebration for its 75th birthday, dividing his analysis between two uneven sections. The first is a soup-to-nuts 'making of'; the second is a collection of interviews, scene-by-scene breakdowns and ephemera for everyone's inner film student. Taken together, they represent a thorough and entertaining entry into the crowded Kane library.

Lebo doesn't skimp on the two big battles that bookend the film's creation. The scramble for credit over who wrote the screenplay, Welles or Herman J. Mankiewicz, is covered with a deep dive into previous drafts, dropped titles (*American*; *John Citizen USA*) and the nitty-gritty of who wrote what. Equally satisfying is Lebo's account of William Randolph Hearst's attempts to quash Kane, arguing it was a thinly veiled attack on his life. The underhand tactics started at cajoling MGM to blacklist stars who attended Kane's premiere, then descended to planting a 14 year-old



Welles on the set of *Citizen Kane* with co-star Joseph Cotten.

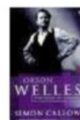
girl in the director's closet, with two photographers waiting to pounce.

Like J. W. Rinzler's *Star Wars* books, this makes great use of production reports (40 per cent of Kane's shots contain special effects), memos and financial records (actor Everett Sloane, who played Mr. Bernstein, received \$2,400 to shave his head) in a forensic investigation of Welles' audacious filmmaking. Behind-the-scenes legends such as composer Bernard Herrmann and cinematographer Gregg Toland get their due, but Lebo also celebrates unsung heroes including make-up artist Maurice Seiderman, who made Welles look younger by using a fish-skin prosthetic. The book lacks the richness and insights of Simon Callow's *The Road To Xanadu*, but emerges as a crisp, clear-eyed, romp through Kane history. Perfect for the precocious two-year-old in your life. **IAN FREER**



FURTHER READING

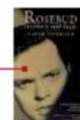
THREE MORE OF THE BEST ORSON BOOKS TO TURN ANY READER INTO A WELLES-ROUNDED FAN...



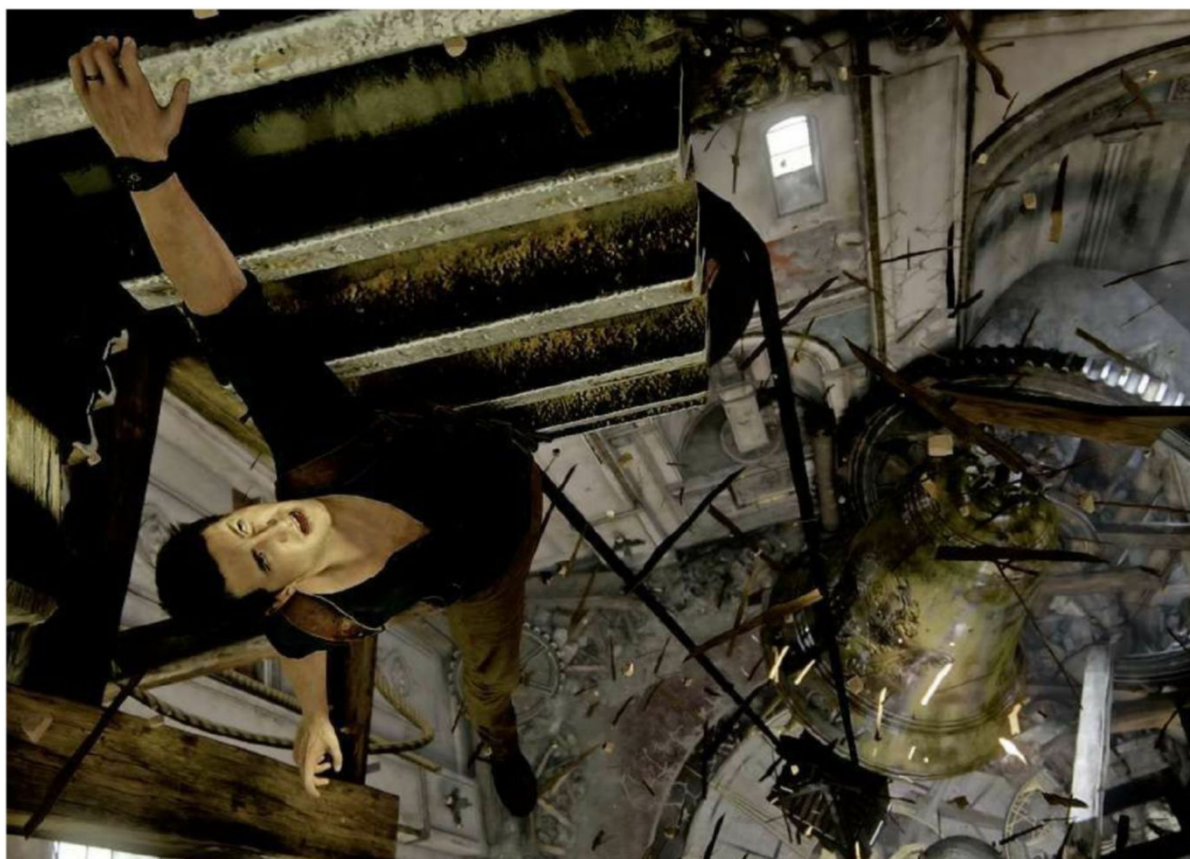
The Road To Xanadu (Simon Callow)
The first in Callow's trilogy of astonishingly researched Welles books. The final part was released last year.



My Lunches With Orson (Peter Biskind)
Meal-time conversations between Welles and pal Henry Jaglom, minus the chewing.



Rosebud: The Story Of Orson Welles (David Thomson)
A lively biography packed with analysis and a chat with an imaginary publisher.



Uncharted 4: A Thief's End



OUT NOW / PS4

COVER-BASED LOOTER



THE RETURN of charismatic, adventuring mass-murderer Nathan Drake has been long awaited. It's four-and-a-half years

since *Drake's Deception* — an age in video games. No doubt aware of this, Sony released a remastered version of the previous three last year — part stopgap, part education. *Uncharted* is its flagship franchise and this game needs to deliver.

Given that, it's oddly slow to get started. The game begins with Nathan as a kid, breaking out of his orphanage with his older brother, Sam, then shows them as young adults on a mission that ends in Sam's "death". Skip forward 15 years (past the events of previous *Uncharted*s), Nathan's in scuba gear and the adventure



proper is ready to begin. Except it isn't. He's working for a salvage company. Job done, he goes home, reminisces, eats dinner, plays *Crash Bandicoot* (seriously — you play level four, 'Boulders'). It's an approach that either displays impressive confidence or enormous self-indulgence.

Stick with it, though, because these sections add emotional weight to what follows. It's no doubt influenced by the directors Neil Druckmann and Bruce Straley's experience on *The Last Of Us*. Finally, scene set, Sam is revealed to not actually be dead and the adventure starts for real. And what an adventure it is — first with a heist in an Italian mansion,

then the excavation of a pirate grave in Scotland, and so on, across the world.

That world is still mostly linear in its waypoints (and not averse to deciding a small drop would kill you if it takes you too far off path) but that isn't a negative — there's a lot to be said for a series that plays to its strengths, while attempting to refine them. *A Thief's End* succeeds in that goal. It still delivers spectacular action set-pieces (including a plunge over a waterfall and a knuckle-whitening bike chase) but its emotionally engaging tale is a clear leap forward in interactive storytelling. Nathan Drake — it's good to have you back. **JONATHAN PILE**

**KILL
THE
COMMUTE**



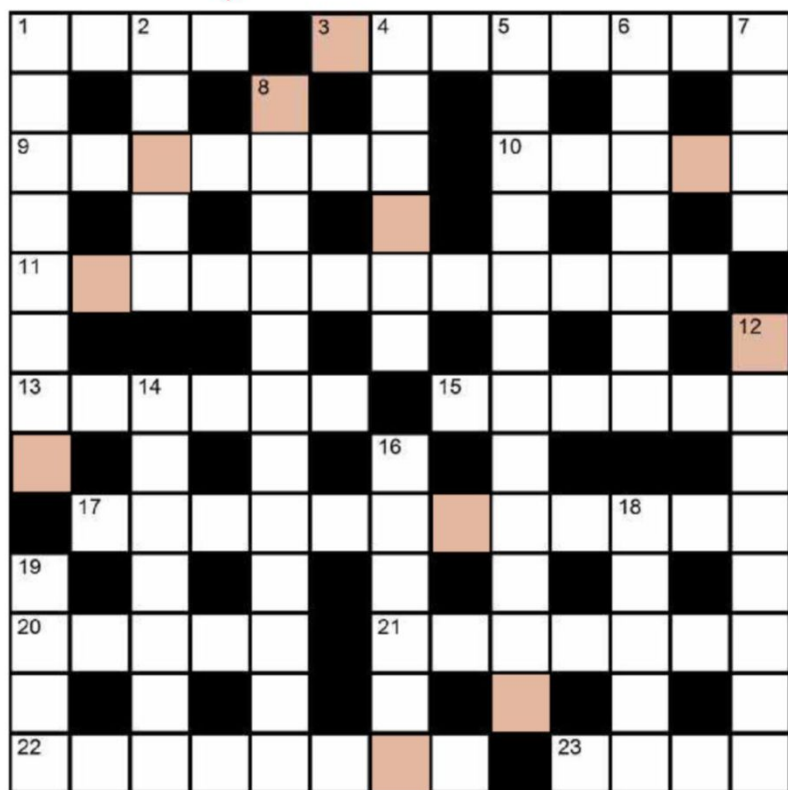
**MARVEL:
AVENGERS
ALLIANCE 2**
iOS/ANDROID

Command your own squad of Marvel superfolk in this follow-up to the 2012 free-to-play hit, which has you battling it out in turn-based combat. The S.H.I.E.L.D.-based storyline is forgettable but the JRPG-inspired gameplay is engaging and the gotta-catch-'em-all draw of collecting unlockable heroes is like crack in spandex.



**WAR
TORTOISE**
iOS/ANDROID

Ever wanted to defend a heavily armoured reptile against a horde of rampaging garden fauna? Yes? Then this is your game. Starting with a field mouse on a .50 calibre machine gun, you hose down rampaging beetles, picking your targets while stockpiling upgrades to turn your plodding mount into a shuffling arsenal of death. It's precisely as much fun as it sounds.



ACROSS

- 1 Spielberg's terrific 1971 TV movie (4)
 3 Could be Kevin, or maybe Melissa (8)
 9 F. Murray from *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (7)
 10 Erich von Stroheim's silent classic, originally nearly eight hours long (5)
 11 Clint Eastwood's 1989 vehicle (4,8)
 13 Spike Lee's remake of Park Chan-wook's abduction movie (6)
 15 He was the first Asian to win a Best Director Oscar (3,3)
 17 Irish actor, once one of *The Usual Suspects* (7,5)
 20 Director John Sayles' 1999 tale of characters stuck neither here nor there (5)
 21 Distracted Eli Bush turns to Blues Brother John (7)
 22 Sounds ominous, this Ethan Hawke-starring horror flick (8)
 23 Ben Stiller and Jack Black's tale of jealousy (4)

DOWN

- 1 Wade Wilson in superhero mode (8)
 2 Smart guys documentary located amid *Alien-Ronin* double feature (5)
 4 De Niro was its king in 1983 (6)
 5 She was *The Commitments*' Imelda Staunton (8,4)
 6 Pink Floyd's filmic structure (3,4)
 7 That small-for-his-age Jedi Master (4)
 8 Did LA cops Louis Gossett Jr., Charles Durning and Perry King sing from the same song sheet in this? (3,9)
 12 Joss Whedon's 2005 space-Western (8)
 14 Neil Young wrote the music for this Johnny Depp starrer, hardly lively at a guess (4,3)
 16 Disney's *Love Bug* Beetle (6)
 18 "Witness the manhunt that changed the course of human history" ran the tagline for this Joseph Fiennes film (5)
 19 Trees under which Sophia Loren and Anthony Perkins fought their desire (4)

Competition ends June 27

HOW TO ENTER Take the letters from each coloured square and rearrange them to form the name of an actor, actress, director or character. Text 'EMPIRE' to 83070, followed by your answer, name and address (with a space between each element of your message!). Texts cost 50p plus standard operator costs. Lines close at midnight, June 27. Winners are selected at random. See below for terms and conditions.

JUNE ANSWERS ACROSS 1 Russia, 4 Solace, 9 Branagh, 10 Gotti, 11 Rango, 12 Bedroom, 13 Strange Days, 18 Stealth, 20 Arwen, 22 Amour, 23 Rampage, 24 Easley, 25 Angels. **DOWN** 1 Robert, 2 Spawn, 3 Isadora, 5 Oh God, 6 Anthony, 7 Enigma, 8 The Big Short, 14 The Boys, 15 Dead Man, 16 Escape, 17 Enders, 19 Lorre, 21 Whale. **ANAGRAM** Stanley Tucci

TERMS AND CONDITIONS: One entry per person. Texts cost 50p + standard network rate. Ask the bill payer's permission before entering. Entries must be received before June 28 or will not be valid (but the cost of the text may still be charged). One winner will be selected at random. The model of the TV and Blu-ray may vary. Competition promoted by Bauer Consumer Media Limited t/a Empire ("Empire"). Empire's choice of winner is final and no correspondence will be entered into in this regard. The winner will be notified, by phone (on the number the text was sent), between seven and ten days after the competition ends. Empire will call the winner a maximum of three times and leave one message. If the winner does not answer the phone or respond to the message within 14 days of the competition's end, Empire will select another winner and the original winner will not win a prize. Entrants must be over 18, resident in the UK and not be employed by Empire. The prize is non-negotiable with no cash alternative. Empire is not responsible for late delivery or unsatisfactory quality of the prize. Entrants agree to the collection of their personal data in accordance with Empire's privacy policy: <http://www.bauerdatapromise.co.uk/>. Winner's personal details will be given to prize provider to arrange delivery of the prize. Bauer reserves the right to amend or cancel these terms or any aspect of the competition (including the prize) at any time if required for reasons beyond its control. Any questions, please email empire@bauermedia.co.uk. Complaints will not be considered if made more than 30 days after the competition ends. Winner's details available on request (after the competition ends) by emailing empire@bauermedia.co.uk. For full Ts&Cs see <http://www.bauerlegal.co.uk/competition-terms.html>.

WIN!

DEADPOOL PROPS INCLUDING HIS DUFFEL BAG



THE REFRESHINGLY ORIGINAL *DEADPOOL* is out on Digital HD on June 4 and on DVD and Blu-ray on June 13. Starring Ryan Reynolds, it's a funny and irreverent addition to the comic-book genre. We have four props used in the film to give away, including *Deadpool*'s duffel bag, one Hula Girl, Vanessa's (Morena Baccarin) key chain and Gavin's (Kyle Cassie) wallet, as used by Wade to buy pizza. Plus we'll throw in a copy of the film on Blu-ray. To be in with a chance of winning, complete the crossword, solve the anagram and text your answer to the number below.

DEADPOOL IS OUT ON DIGITAL HD ON JUNE 4 AND DVD AND BLU-RAY ON JUNE 13, COURTESY OF TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT.



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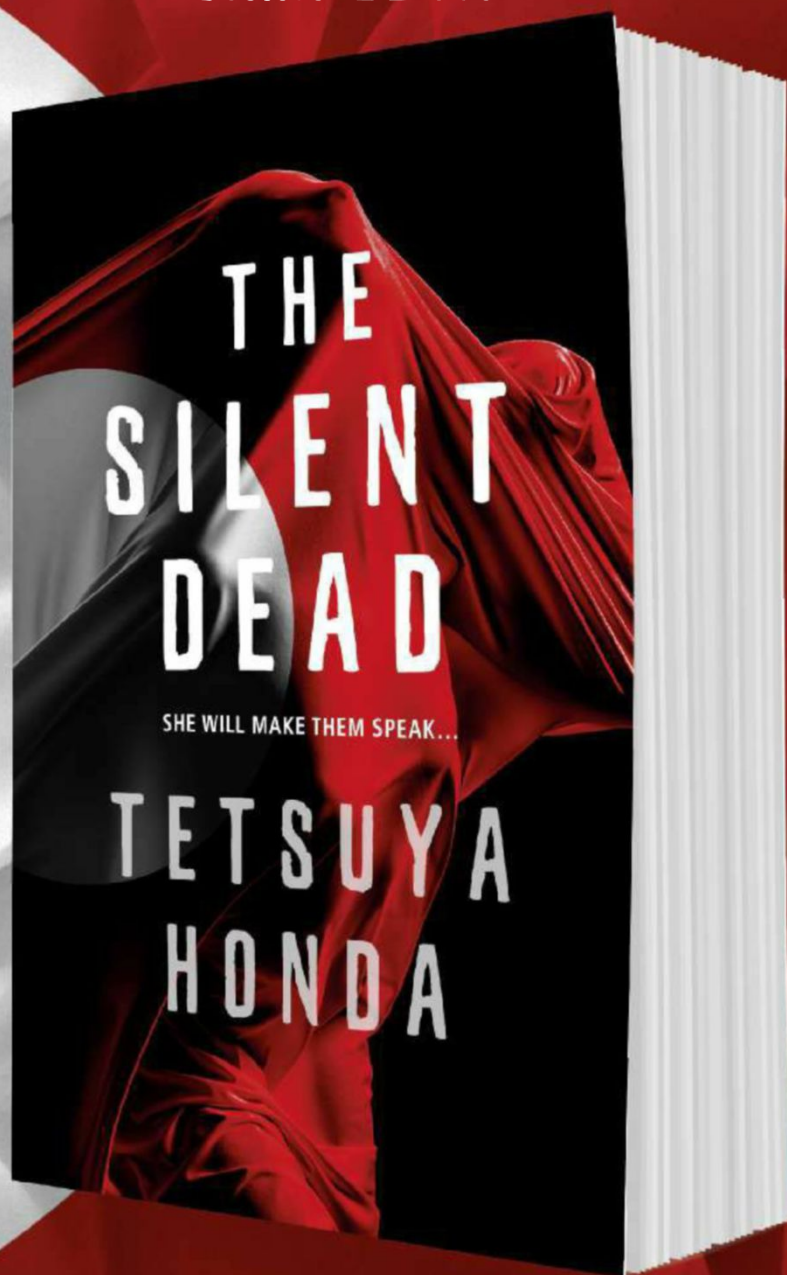


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01: Green Room 02: Aliens/Facebook 03: The Karate Kid 04: Star Wars 05: Bone Tomahawk 06: The Dark Knight Rises 07: Aliens 08: The Big Lebowski 09: The Thing 10: Oh Brother, Where Art Thou?
11: Inglourious Basterds 12: Raiders of the Lost Ark 13: High-Rise 14: Big Trouble in Little China 15: The Blues Brothers 16: Whiplash 17: Back to the Future Part II 18: Ghostbusters II 19: What We Do in the Shadows
20: Big 21: Aliens 22: The Thing 23: Alien 24: Jurassic Park 25: Reservoir Dogs 26: Alien 27: Groundhog Day 28: Blade Runner 29: Robocop 30: Back to the Future 31: Dredd 32: The Wicker Man 33: Ex Machina
34: Aliens 35: Dredd 36: An American Werewolf in London 37: The Usual Suspects 38: Sunshine 39: Blade Runner 40: Back to the Future 41: Temple of Doom 42: Rollerball 43: Aliens 44: Star Wars 45: Rocky
46: Star Wars 47: Jaws 48: Blade Runner 49: The Fifth Element 50: Apocalypse Now 51: Withnail and I 52: Dawn of the Dead 53: Various Tarantino films 54: Children of Men

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COMMENT

BLACK MAIL

I enjoyed reading your Shane Black piece. *The Last Boy Scout* is one of my favourite films and I think it is criminally undervalued when compared to films like *Lethal Weapon*. It's easily one of Bruce Willis' best films where he's still sporting his own hair!

ISABELLA HOLLIFIELD, VIA EMAIL

And almost certainly the best Bruce Willis film to co-star a lethal hand puppet shaped like a cat.



Billy Zane writing very sincere advice to @empiremagazine readers and donating his fee to charity is just really lovely. A mag highlight.

NATHANIEL SMITH (@NATHANIELSMITH)



ME, MY SELFIE AND I

I was watching Robin Williams' *One Hour Photo* last night and, early in the film, Robin's character takes a selfie with a customer's film camera. Did this 2002 film contain the first movie selfie?

ANDREW TODD, VIA EMAIL

Good challenge: can anyone identify an earlier movie selfie? We're going back to check our copy of 1929 experimental Soviet classic *Man With A Movie Camera*.

Which is the best film to feature a black panther this year: *The Jungle Book* or *Civil War*?

RYAN LEE GREGORY (@RYANLEEGREGORY)

LETTER of the MONTH



INDOMINUS MAG

I recently showed my five year-old son my 16-year collection of the finest-ever film magazine, granting him unbridled access to my library so he could learn about films. Off his own back, he decided to make his own *Empire* magazine, based on *Jurassic World*. Inside he revealed intricate plot details of the new *LEGO Batman Movie* and reviewed all the *Star Wars* films. I am very proud, but aware that my collection seems to be getting thinner and out of order.

DAMON CARTER, VIA EMAIL

This is amazing work, Damon. But don't take it from us: we were so impressed by your son's efforts that we sent it on to *Jurassic World* director Colin Trevorrow. Colin says: "We spent months working on our *Empire* cover and this artist tops it in a day? How did he find out what happens in the sequel?"



Empire's star letter wins a Picturehouse Membership, plus one for a friend! Valid for one year at 23 Picturehouse Cinemas across the UK, including the brand-new Picturehouse Central in London's West End, each membership comes pre-loaded with four free tickets, and gets you access to priority booking and exclusive discounts on everything in the cinema. When you write to us, please ensure you include your full contact details so we can arrange delivery of your prize.



A VIEW TO A NEILL

I very much enjoyed the Best Of Times/ Worst Of Times interview with Sam Neill, in which the great man discussed his work on films such as *Possession* and *Jurassic Park III*. However, the part where he called his James Bond audition "one of the worst days of my life" made me feel a bit sad. With his suave charm and Kiwi cool, Sam is one of my favourite actors and I think he would have made an awesome 007. Especially if he'd played it as his demented, blood-soaked character from *Event Horizon*. "Where we're going, we won't need licences to kill!"

PAUL BRIGGS, SOMERSET

IF THE *KRYPTON* TV SHOW LOOKS ANYTHING LIKE THE FIRST 20 MINS. OF *MAN OF STEEL*, THEN I'M IN. THE GEOMETAL TECH AND LOOK WAS AWESOME.

CHRIS HITCHEN, VIA FACEBOOK



READING THIS MONTH'S @EMPIREMAGAZINE.

I CAN'T BE THE ONLY ONE TO SPOT THE @GHOSTBUSTERS NUMBER-PLATED EASTER EGG?

MARK SKELTON (@SKELLY2505)





EMPIRE CLASSIC SCENE

Beverly Hills Cop

"IT'S SHOWTIME, OKAY?"

SETTING THE SCENE When it came to casting the small but juicy role of Inspector Douglas Todd, the superior of Detroit lawman Axel Foley (Eddie Murphy), director Martin Brest went with Gil Hill, an actual ex-detective and veteran of the Detroit homicide division. It was a smart move. Every scene between Hill and Murphy crackles with hilarious energy, especially this first encounter following a disastrous attempt at a bust by Foley. Hill sadly died this year, but his legacy as cinema's greatest angry police chief lives on.

INT. LOCKER ROOM — DETROIT POLICE HEADQUARTERS — DAY

Axel is being warned by fellow cop Jeffrey (Paul Reiser) that his boss is on the warpath. Suddenly, the last voice Foley wants to hear rings out.

Inspector Todd (O.S.): IS THAT FUCKIN' FOLEY IN HERE?

Axel: Shit.

Jeffrey: Alright, there's Todd. It's showtime, okay?

Inspector Todd storms right up to Axel.

Axel: Hey, boss, I know what you're going to say, but...

Inspector Todd (interrupting): You mind telling me where the fuck you come off going undercover without authorisation from me? What the fuck is this all about? You wanna play some fucking bullshit cowboy cop, go do it in somebody else's precinct.

Axel: Don't you want to hear my side of the story?

Inspector Todd: What's your fucking side of the story?

Axel (after a long beat): Let's hear your side of the story.

Inspector Todd: Hey, Axel, I'm not taking any more of this shit from you. You know how much this little stunt of yours is going to cost this city?

Axel: I don't think cost is the issue here, sir. I think the issue should be my blatant disregard for proper procedure.

Inspector Todd: You damn right, wiseass! The Mayor called the Chief. The Chief called the Deputy Chief. The Deputy Chief just chewed my ass off. You see I don't have any bit of it left, don't you? Where the fuck did you get a truckload of cigarettes from anyway?

Axel: From the Dearborn hijack.

Inspector Todd: From the Dearborn hijack? That fucking bust went down last week. That truck is supposed to be in the damn pound!

Jeffrey (whispering to Axel): I tried to tell you.

Inspector Todd: Jeffrey, this is none of your fucking business!

Jeffrey: This is not my locker...

He vanishes.

Inspector Todd (softening): Listen, Axel. No more of these set-ups, you understand? You're a good cop and you've got great potential. But you don't know every fucking thing. And I'm tired of taking the heat for your ass. One more time, you're out on the street. Do you understand me?

Axel: But, boss, let me tell you...

Inspector Todd: Do you understand me?

Axel: Yeah, I understand.

The inspector starts to walk away.

Axel: Boss, the chief ain't chewed it all off. You still got a little ass there.

Inspector Todd: Don't fuck with me, Axel. Not now. Go on. Go home.



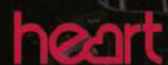
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